Sonic the Hedgehog: Tales from Mobius

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Spin off to Heroes of Mobius: This is a collection of stories I don't have room to tell in Heroes of Mobius. The stories in this collection take place during certain events in Heroes of Mobius. These stories aren't just side-stories, they do contribute to the main story as well so you need to read them in order to understand some of the things in the main series. Hope you enjoy!

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Sonic the Hedgehog: Tales from Mobius

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1Sonic the Hedgehog: Tales from Mobius

Author's Notes

Hey there users of . Since I have so many ideas for *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* and so little space for them all, I've made this separate story so I can tell some tales that I don't have room to tell in H.O.M. (Heroes of Mobius). These stories take place during certain events in H.O.M. and I hope you'll find these as enjoyable as the stories in H.O.M. Well enjoy…

Arc 1: The Malicious, Metropolis Masquerade

Takes place during Story 3 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: Delayed Journeys

The council's decision had been made and the decision was to send some of their own Royal Fighters to help out the less fortunate groups in other places on Mobius. Two of these fighters were an orange dog named Wilson and a purple mouse named Mandy. They had been requested to go to Grand Metropolis, the second largest city on Mobius. The Royal Fighters of Grand Metropolis were suffering heavily from Eggman's never ending army of robots and they needed an extra hand otherwise Grand Metropolis would suffer a terrible fate. Wilson and Mandy were skilled in combat and spy work and both could take down most robots easily thanks to some combat training from fellow fighter Geoffrey St. John. Their skills had paid off for eight months so far so hopefully their skills would pay off in their mission in Grand Metropolis. Wilson and Mandy were both disappointed that none of their team mates were joining them on this mission. In fact Wilson even wished they could have brought Sonic the Hedgehog or Geoffrey St. John or even Bunnie Rabbot but sadly they couldn't for as they were occupied elsewhere.

After the council had made their decision, Nicole the Lynx, Sally

Acorn's lady-in-waiting informed Wilson and Mandy on where they had been requested to go.

"The council has decided to send you two to Grand Metropolis to help the fighter groups there." she explained.

"We know, we overheard you lot talking in there." said Wilson "And we shall not let this kingdom down."

"We'll make sure Grand Metropolis is free from Dr. Eggman's reign of terror." said Mandy, saluting "That fat man won't know what hit him!"

"You two had better be careful though." noted Nicole "This is the first time you're going on a mission without Sonic the Hedgehog so if you get into trouble, he won't be able to help you since he's staying with the Mobotropolis fighters."

"We'll take care of ourselves." said Wilson, even though he was shivering at the thought of getting caught and Sonic wouldn't be able to help him like last time*.

"OK then." said Nicole "Castle Acorn wishes you two luck on your mission."

"Thank you Nicole." said Wilson "And we wish you lot luck while we're gone."

Nicole smiled at the fighters and left the room.

Moments later, Wilson and Mandy left Castle Acorn and got into a sleek, silver hover car Mandy had built herself. The car had black windows, four hover pads and three jet boosters in the back. Mandy was a skilled car mechanic and she could make hi-tech hover cars of any shape or size in a matter of moments so that really helped her and Wilson. After they climbed into the car and strapped themselves up, they saw Geoffrey St. John heading off, presumably to an airport so he could catch a plane to Downunda, his designated place. They also saw Bunnie Rabbot flying off to Megapolis, her designated place. Strangely enough, they didn't see Fiona with Sonic the Hedgehog. Maybe Fiona was doing something elsewhere.

They watched Sonic zip off away from Mobotropolis and into the forests of Green Hill Zone.

"I hope Sonic and the others have good luck on their missions." said Wilson as Sonic disappeared into the distance.

"Oh they'll be fine Wilson." said Mandy calmly "Especially Sonic, that guy's unbeatable and he's the reason we're still fighting now."

"But now we're on a mission without him, do you think we won't be so lucky against Dr. Eggman?" wondered Wilson.

"Oh Wilson, you worry too much." chuckled Mandy "But I find that cute about you. Now let's get going to Grand Metropolis! Those fighters are waiting for us!"

She turned the key in the ignition and the glamorous, sleek, silver hover car hovered five centimetres off the ground and hurtled off through the under construction city of Grand Metropolis. As the two Mobians drove through the city, Wilson admired the hard work going on to rebuild the destroyed city. Mobotropolis had been a great place of civilization and Dr. Eggman shattered all that in a matter of moments with his giant battleship**.

"Do you think the new Mobotropolis will be better then the old one?" asked Wilson.

"Eh. Probably." said Mandy casually "I don't care if it's better or just the same, it'll still be Mobotropolis all the same."

Wilson nodded in agreement.

"I do hope my parents are OK." he suddenly said aloud.

"What's made you say that then?" asked Mandy as she steered the car out of the under construction city.

"My parents live in Grand Metropolis." explained Wilson "And since it's under heavy siege from Dr. Eggman I'm concerned about them."

"Coincidentally." Mandy suddenly said "My sister Marion Mouse lives in Grand Metropolis. She originally lived here with me and my

parents but she wanted to live on her own so she moved to Grand Metropolis. Come to think of her." she added, her face fell into a sad expression "I hope she's OK, what with Eggman and his robot army attacking it."

"So going to Grand Metropolis is almost like visiting old relatives for us." said Wilson "Let's just hope they're alright by the time we get there."

"I think for the time being, we should keep our minds focused on helping the Royal Fighters of Grand Metropolis instead of our relatives Wilson darling." said Mandy kindly.

"Good idea." said Wilson quickly.

The hover drove on through the Great Forest, a forest located on the west side of Green Hill Zone. From there on, it was on to the mighty and magnificent city of Grand Metropolis.

An anonymous robed and hooded figure with mechanical arms was sitting in a robotic throne and watching the computer monitors that loomed in front of her with close intention. These monitors displayed several areas of Mobius such as Green Hill Zone, Megapolis, Downunda, the Great Forest and Grand Metropolis. The figure watched the monitor displaying Green Hill Zone. The monitor showed Sonic the Hedgehog running to some place unknown to the figure.

"So, Sonic's going somewhere is he?" the figure purred into a nearby microphone that altered her voice and made her sound creepily robotical and growling "I do hope Eggman is well prepared for his arrival otherwise we'll have a repeat of what's happened for eight months straight already."

Then the figure looked at the monitor displaying Megapolis. The monitor showed Bunnie Rabbot arriving on the scene at last and introducing herself to Thomas Tiger, leader of the Royal Fighters of Megapolis. The figure smiled a cruel sadistic smile.

"Miss Bunnie Rabbot has arrived at last." she purred once again "All the better for us to capture her and finish off the roboticization that was unfortunately halted by that stupid skunk Geoffrey St. John***."

"Speaking of Geoffrey…" purred the figure, she turned her attention to the monitor displaying Downunda "That little prat is on his way to Downunda. I do hope the Eggman army there will remould his image into a skunk carpet for me to wipe my feet on."

Then the figure turned her attention to the centre monitor that displayed the Great Forest. The monitor showed Wilson and Mandy in the hover car, heading to Grand Metropolis at a terrific speed. The sight of this didn't surprise the figure the slightest. She tapped the arms of the chair.

"So, those wannabe fighters Wilson and Mandy are heading here are they?" she sneered "Well I'm not about to let them get here in a hurry! I think I'll take some of my precious time to slow them down or better still, stop them from coming here at all!"

She pressed a button on the throne. A missile shaped robot dressed in a tutu appeared into the room and stood beside her. The robot looked very similar to Dr. Eggman's assistant bot Alonzo only it was thinner in appearance and instead of black hair; her head was painted like it had long flowing blonde hair. The robot even had a stupidly girly bow on top and one wheel that it balanced and moved around on.

"You summoned me Mistress of Darkness?" the robot asked in an ear piercingly high girl voice.

"Send a squad of Police Bots out into the Great Forest and order them to terminate these two Mobians." ordered the figure, whom apparently was called the Mistress of Darkness.

She pointed at the monitor displaying Wilson and Mandy so the tutu wearing robot knew who she meant.

"At once Mistress." said the robot.

"Oh and BECK-E." the mistress called the robot back for a moment

"Don't you dare show your face in these premises if you fail, or something very horrible will happen to you."

"Yes Mistress." gulped BECK-E, shaking like a leaf.

BECK-E left the room to call the Police Squad. The Mistress smiled darkly and tapped the sides of her throne with her fingers.

"Dr. Eggman, I shall not let you down my lord." she purred to herself "I will not let this wonderful city fall out of your malevolent grasp."

She clenched her fist tightly.

"Those Mobians will pay ever so delightfully for daring to defy you oh glorious master." she said ever so sinisterly "And I can't imagine Bunnie, Geoffrey or even Wilson and Mandy will do well without that idiot Sonic the Hedgehog here to help them…"

The Mistress focused her attention back onto the computer monitors that loomed in front of her.

Grand Metropolis was definitely not looking so grand right now. The second largest city on Mobius was crumbling to the ground like a sandcastle under the heavy onslaught of Eggman's nefarious army of malevolent robots. Out of all the cities on Mobius, Grand Metropolis was suffering the heaviest from Eggman's robot army due to the lack of defence Grand Metropolis had. The Royal Fighters had managed to form a group in Grand Metropolis but not many had joined up and many of those that had joined up had fallen in combat so they needed an extra hand, which was why they had sent requests to borrow a fighter or two from Mobotropolis since Mobotropolis had the best Royal Fighters. The leader of the Metropolis Royal Fighters was a chipmunk with a tough gravely voice, a fierce dedication to his duty and little tolerance for failure named Bostock. Bostock wore a traditional army man's outfit complete with green uniform and tin hat. Bostock was a tough fighter and was hard to beat in battle and he had a long track of battles with Eggman robots to prove it. Bostock had a friend named Mortimer who was equally as tough as he was and was specialized in

strategic measures. Mortimer was a chipmunk just like Bostock and he wore combat fatigues and heavy military boots. Bostock and Mortimer had been waiting for help for a half an hour now and nothing had come so far. They just stood there and watched Grand Metropolis crumble before them in the distance.

"Where is the backup Mobotropolis is supposed to be sending us?" grumbled Bostock gruffly "I sent that call over thirty minutes ago!"

"Clam down Bostock." said Mortimer "Help will arrive sooner or later. And don't forget Mobotropolis isn't very close to Grand Metropolis so they'll take a bit of a long time at the most."

"I know, I know Mortimer my friend." sighed Bostock loudly "It's just I'm not a patient man and I can't bear to watch this city crumble any longer."

"I hate watching the city crumble too." said Mortimer glumly.

"And I also can't stand to wait by, knowing there are innocent people getting enslaved or slaughtered by those menacing machines!" grumbled Bostock.

"I know, it's awful isn't it?" said Mortimer.

"And if that wasn't bad enough, I've heard that those robots are planning a drilling operation in the centre of the city." said Bostock "Who knows how much damage that'll cause?"

Mortimer didn't know what to say so he just nodded and stared into the distance.

"Hopefully, the backup we've requested will be here and then we can stop that drilling operation." said Bostock "I refuse to let this city fall any further!" he cried, clenching his fists.

But unfortunately, help was going to take a little longer then expected…

Meanwhile, Wilson and Mandy were driving through the peaceful

Great Forest. Wilson had a map opened out so he could tell Mandy which way they had to go while Mandy concentrated on the driving. It had only been ten minutes since they left Mobotropolis and they'd be driving for another ten or fifteen minutes at least. Mandy could make the car go faster if she wanted but she risked crashing into a tree and there wasn't much space in a forest so she had to keep it slow and steady.

"Where are we now Wilson?" asked Mandy, keeping her eyes on the path.

Wilson glanced at the map.

"We're almost out of the Great Forest." he said as he eyed the place they were in now on the map "Once we get out of here, you can pick up speed and make up the lost time."

"That's a relief." said Mandy "I hate driving in the forest, you risk crashing a lot more in a forest then on a normal road."

She spotted a log lying on the path. She pressed a button on the steering column and the hover car levitated over the log. It settled back down in its normal hovering height after passing the log. Then the sleek silver car finally made it out of the Great Forest. Now there was nothing but wide open space, Mandy could go as fast as she liked. She pressed down on the acceleration pedal and the hover car's three jet boosters began to roar loudly. Then the car shot down the road like a charging bull. Mandy loved going fast but Wilson, not so much. Going fast always made him feel giddy and he always worried about crashing since a car going extremely fast is very likely to crash into something if you lose control. Nevertheless, Wilson didn't say anything and just let Mandy have her fun. After all, the faster they got to Grand Metropolis the better and then they'd be able to assist the Royal Fighters in pushing back Eggman's nefarious forces. Mandy laughed childishly as she sped down the road with the wind whooshing past the car.

"I dunno why but it's always freaking awesome when I go this fast!" she squealed with delight.

"I'll say it is!" yelped Wilson as he clutched onto the edges of his

seat and trying to refrain from having a panic attack "Maybe a little too awesome!"

"There's no such thing as too awesome Wilson!" laughed Mandy.

The car was going so fast that Mandy failed to notice the line of hovering police cars sitting on the edge of the road. Unfortunately for her, they were not police cars driven by normal policemen, they were police cars driven by Eggman robots. This was the police squad that the Mistress of Darkness had sent out earlier and they were going to capture Wilson and Mandy and stop them from ever reaching Grand Metropolis just like the Mistress had ordered them to. The police cars activated their sirens and they zoomed down the road. The sirens screamed and wailed as they drove after Wilson and Mandy. Wilson heard the sirens and glanced at the rear view mirror to see what was behind the car. He saw the police cars chasing him and Mandy down and he groaned loudly.

"You see Mandy, this is what you get for going too far!" he scolded "You're going miles too fast and now the cops are after us!"

"Ya what?" asked Mandy.

"Look in your rear view mirror girl." said Wilson.

Mandy glanced at her rear view mirror. Surely enough, she saw the police cars chasing after them with their sirens blaring and their roof mounted light bars flashing brightly. Mandy sighed in annoyance.

"Good grief!" she groaned "Just like the cops to ruin my fun! Oh well, there's a place I need to be at right now and it's not jail so I'd best slow down and apologize for my speeding."

She lifted her foot off the acceleration pedal and pressed it down on the brake pedal. The hover car ground to a halt and the police cars surrounded it as if they were trying to make sure it wouldn't get away. Mandy rolled the window down and poked her head out of the car so she could speak to the police car on her left.

"Ahem, what seems to be the problem officer?" she asked politely.

The window to the police car rolled down, revealing the driver which

was a silver coloured robot with a red domed shaped head. The robot pulled out a pistol and pointed it straight at Mandy's face!

"Oh my god!" shrieked Mandy "Wilson, duck!"

Wilson ducked, even though he wasn't sure why he had to. Mandy ducked just as the robot shot at her. The blast whizzed over their heads, smashed through the window on the other side of the car and hit the police car that was guarding the right side of Mandy's car. The car was accidentally blown to smithereens. Quick as a flash, Wilson pulled out a smoke bomb from his utility belt and threw it at the robot shooting at him and Mandy. The bomb landed on the robot's lap and smoke billowed out and filled the entire car top to bottom. Now the robot was distracted, Mandy slammed her foot on the pedal. Her car levitated above the ground and whizzed over the police car preventing her from going forwards. The car landed and the two fighters whizzed off. The police cars chased after them, their sirens wailing loudly. One police car rolled its window down and a robot leaned out of it. This robot wasn't driving the car; it was in the passenger's seat. The robot was also armed with a rocket launcher. It aimed the launcher at Mandy's car and opened fire. A rocket shot out of the launcher, screaming loudly. The rocket hit the ground just centimetres away from Mandy's car and the force of the explosion sent the car hurling into the air.

"YIIIIKKKEEEESSSS!" screamed Wilson, clutching the edges of his seat for dear life.

"Quit messing up my car you vandals!" screamed Mandy.

The car landed with a very sharp thud bonnet first on the ground. Then it hurled through the air in a somersault and landed front first. Then the car spun around wildly before coming to a halt next to a tree which it bashed into. Several acorns fell from the tree and landed all over the car's roof. Wilson looked like he was about to drop dead whereas Mandy looked like she wanted to kill somebody. The car's front was a bent and buckled mess and the windshield had cracked so badly I bet it would shatter to pieces if someone merely flicked it. If there's anything Mandy can't stand, it's her car getting wrecked. She opened the door and stepped out of the car. Wilson staggered out after her.

"This is why I prefer to walk!" he squeaked.

The police squad finally caught up to them and all five cars ground to a halt. The robots occupying the cars all stepped out of the cars and aimed their weapons. The robots were all blue with red heads and they were armed with pistols or rocket launchers. There were ten robots in total since two robots occupied one car. Mandy bent down in a battle ready stance as the robots prepared to shoot her.

"That's it you scoundrels!" she spat "Trying to blow my head off is bad enough but wrecking my beautiful car is going too far!"

"Yeah, what she said!" added Wilson.

The robots opened fire. Wilson and Mandy both somersaulted out of the way of the laser blasts. Wilson landed a powerful dropkick on one robot and sent it falling flat on its face and before it could recover, he stole the robot's gun and shot the robot to pieces with it.

"Now that's what I call giving you a taste of your own medicine." he said.

Two more robots tried to shoot him but Wilson shot them first. The robots crumbled to pieces before him.

As for Mandy, she landed feet first on one robot and knocked it over. Then she gave one robot a flying kick around the head. That kick was so powerful it sent the robot's head spinning around and around like a roundabout. The robot she had knocked over got back to its feet and tried to seize Mandy but the tough mouse spotted it and punched it over. The robot whose head was spinning around finally stopped his head spinning and tried to attack Mandy but she grabbed it by the arm and flipped it over her shoulder and onto its back.

"That's what you get for wrecking my car!" she said crossly.

Then suddenly one robot grabbed her by the tail and pulled her towards itself. Then the robot grappled Mandy into a choke hold, its arm wrapped tightly around her neck. Robots often had strong grips and this one was of no exception. Mandy was powerless to do

anything in the robot's grasp. Luckily for her, Wilson saw she was in trouble and blasted the robot's head off with the gun he had. The robot released Mandy and collapsed onto its back.

"Thanks Wilson." said Mandy.

"No probs." said Wilson "Just doing what Royal Fighters do best, smashing Eggman robots."

Wilson should have kept his eye on the battle instead of making statements because a robot managed to creep up on him and kick him in the back of the head. The stunned dog fell on his stomach and the robot snatched his gun away and pointed it at the back of his head.

"This is why I prefer not to use weapons most of the time!" whined Wilson.

"You get off my friend or I'll make you sorry!" warned Mandy.

The two robots she had knocked out had regained consciousness and they grabbed her by the arms. Mandy tried to get free but like the robot that got her in a chokehold earlier; their grip was too powerful, even for someone as strong as her.

"Let me go you mechanical freaks!" yelled Mandy.

The robots ignored her and carried her to one of the police cars. Wilson watched helplessly as his friend was taken away. He had a feeling he would be next unless he did something fast. The robot that was holding him at gunpoint then grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and began to carry him towards the police cars. That's when Wilson had an idea. He grabbed a smoke bomb from his utility belt and hurled it into the robot's face. The robot staggered backwards and dropped Wilson. Now he was free, Wilson ran up to the two robots carrying Mandy to the police cars and kicked one of them in the back of the legs. This caused the robot to kneel down and Mandy saw the opportunity to punch it in the head. The other robot still had hold of her but not for long. Wilson gave it a sharp kick to the back and this in turn caused the robot to let go of Mandy and then Mandy gave it a kick to the head so hard its head came clean

off its body. The headless robot fainted. Wilson and Mandy gave each other a high five.

"As Sonic might say, way past cool!" chuckled Wilson.

"Whatever you do cute stuff, don't quote Sonic the Hedgehog." giggled Mandy "No one does it better then him."

As for the robots, there were only five left and they had decided to change tactics. Instead of facing the two directly, they hid behind the police cars and aimed a rocket launcher at them. They prepared to fire at them but unfortunately for them, Mandy heard them loading the rockets. Wilson heard it too and they both ran for it. The robots fired just a fraction too late and the rocket soared past the dog and mouse and hit some trees instead. The rocket exploded and several trees fell over. Wilson picked up a robot's gun that was lying around and opened fire on the police cars. He was hoping to shoot them so badly they would explode due to the damage done to the cars. The robots had no idea what he was doing but they decided to try firing another rocket to see if they could get him this time. The robots fired another rocket at Wilson. Wilson only just managed to dodge the rocket and continued to fire at the police cars. He managed to shoot the engine to one police car and that one shot to the engine blew the car to smithereens. The explosion of the first car set the other cars off and they exploded. The robots hiding behind the cars were blown away from the sheer power of the explosion and they were reduced to nuts and bolts. Chunks of metal from the cars showered the entire woods and smoke and fire billowed out from the destroyed cars. Wilson punched the air and whooped with joy.

"Now that's serious shooting baby!" he cheered.

Mandy had watched the whole thing and she couldn't believe her eyes.

"Whoa Wilson, that was incredible!" she said "You're one sharp shooter!"

"Yeah I am, aren't I?" said Wilson "And the irony of it all is, I'm not that keen on using a gun and yet I use one quite well."

"Well it's a good thing you do use one well because you've just saved our necks out here." said Mandy "Now those robots are gone, we can get to Grand Metropolis now."

"Is the car alright?" asked Wilson.

Mandy ran over to her car to inspect it. The car's front and grill was slightly buckled and the right door had a dent in it from when the robots sent it flying and crashing. Other then that, it still seemed to be in working order. Mandy opened the door, stepped into the car and turned the ignition on. The car started up surprisingly nicely.

"I think the car's alright!" cried Mandy.

"Well that's a relief." said Wilson, throwing the gun away and running over to the car.

He opened the door and got into the passenger's seat next to Mandy. They both buckled themselves up and Mandy stepped on the pedal. The car roared into life and it sped off down the path at top speed.

"If we hurry, we can make up the lost time." said Mandy "I just hope Grand Metropolis isn't too roughened up from Eggman's attacks."

"I just hope my parents are alright." said Wilson, looking at the window and watching the scenery whiz past as the car sped on.

They would find out these facts once they arrived at Grand Metropolis. And that was still a good few minutes away but with Mandy going as fast as possible, they would arrive in no time…

"Come on you worms, you can work faster then this!" snarled the Mistress of Darkness.

The Eggman robots began to pick up the pace on the enormous drill they were setting up. The terrifying Mistress just stood and watched the robots build the drill and barked out orders. The robots were setting up an enormous drill with a drill bit that was larger then a five storey building and laden with ferocious spikes. This drill was going

to dig down into the earth so they could unearth the sea of oil that had been detected down there. With this much oil, Eggman would never run out and his robots would always have some. Not to mention they could ruin the environment a little just to add insult to injury with so much oil. All the Mobians would get stuck if they were drenched in oil after all. The Mistress of Darkness was looking forward to this operation dearly and she did not want it to fail otherwise she would get harsh punishment from Dr. Eggman.

"The drilling operation must go according to plan." she said to herself "This oil must be mined and unearthed otherwise Eggman's robots will be limited on amounts and they won't be able to run!"

"Mistress!" squealed the obnoxious shrilling voice of BECK-E.

She zoomed up beside the Mistress in a salute.

"What is it you obnoxious little tin-can?" barked the Mistress "I'm overseeing the operation right now!"

"I have terrible news Mistress!" squealed BECK-E "The police-squad you sent to get Wilson and Mandy has been completely destroyed!"

The Mistress said nothing. She pointed a sharp metallic finger at BECK-E and fired a laser at her. BECK-E was blown to smithereens but just like Alonzo, she could put herself back together so it didn't matter. The Mistress turned away from the destroyed BECK-E and groaned loudly.

"How did Wilson and Mandy survive that?" she screeched "They're supposed to be useless! They're talent-less wannabes, not skilled fighters! It's obvious I overlooked those morons isn't it?"

She put a metallic finger to her lips and mused for a moment.

"I'll need a better robot to stop them coming here." she said to herself "And I have just the thing."

She turned to BECK-E, who was finishing putting herself back together and pointed a finger as sharp as a dagger at her.

"BECK-E, send out Egg-Taurus to get Wilson and Mandy!" she

barked.

"But Mistress!" protested BECK-E "Egg-Taurus isn't finished yet!"

"That's an order!" snarled the Mistress.

"Y-y-yes Mistress, at once Mistress!" cried BECK-E, zooming off like a toddler pedalling really fast on a tricycle. The Mistress watched her gormless sidekick rush off and said to herself:

"That Egg-Taurus is bound to give them a run for their money. It is the most powerful Eggman robot so far built and since they don't have Sonic with them, they have no chance."

And she cackled a cruel, icy cackle at the very thought of Wilson and Mandy, defeated and dead by the horns of Egg-Taurus. Once they were gone, the drilling operation could commence and no one would be able to stop it. Eggman would be wallowing in oil when the Mistress was finished…

Footnotes:

Wilson and Mandy were both narrowly saved from roboticization by Sonic in Story 1 of *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 2**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 1 (Again!)**

The Malicious Metropolis Masquerade 2

The Malicious Metropolis Masquerade

Part 2: Bull Fight

The sleek, shiny, speedy hover car continued to speed down the path and on through the woods. While Mandy concentrated on the driving, Wilson consulted the map to see if they were going in the right direction. A short while later the car pulled up at a road that led two ways. Unfortunately there was no sign post telling them which road led to where so they had no idea which way Grand Metropolis was. Mandy looked left and right, trying to make a wild guess but she didn't dare to in case she sent them down the wrong way.

"So Wilson, which way do we go from here?" asked Mandy.

Wilson peered down at the map and studied it to see if he could decipher if it was the right way or not.

"Um…according to the map…it might be right." said Wilson a few moments later "But I'm not fully sure. The map's not very clear on this part."

"Let me see that." said Mandy, taking the map off Wilson and looking at it herself.

She soon found out what Wilson meant. The map unfortunately had a coffee stain on it and the stain was in on the spot they were at now so it was hard to make out which way Grand Metropolis was. Mandy groaned heavily.

"What kind of lame-brained moron spills coffee on a map?" she grumbled "And what kind of lame-brained moron gives us a coffee stained map?"

"I dunno." said Wilson "So what do we do now since we can't tell which way is Grand Metropolis?"

"I'm gonna take a wild guess and go right." said Mandy "I'm sure it's this way anyway."

So Mandy turned the steering wheel to the right, stepped on the pedal and the car turned to the right.

"I think when we get back to Mobotropolis we should get a different map." said Wilson, folding it up and putting it away since he didn't think he would need it right now "So next time we need to get to Grand Metropolis, we won't have any trouble getting there."

"I'll say." said Mandy "And we'd best keep any maps away from anyone who drinks coffee so they can't stain any more maps."

"Hey Mandy, what's that in the distance?" cried Wilson, leaning forward in his seat.

Mandy leaned forward to see what Wilson was looking at. In the distance they could see a cloud of dust coming towards them. The cloud of dust was being caused by something running extremely fast and it was coming towards Wilson and Mandy. The thing came into view, revealing itself to be a huge robot shaped like a bull with wheels in place of legs. The bull robot was silver and gold with a few red stripes here and there and its armour looked incredibly tough. Its head was black and it had two ferociously long and sharp horns. Its optics were blood red, it had two Gatling guns on it's back and two on either side of it's neck and the robot looked furious. It bellowed loudly as it thundered towards Wilson and Mandy.

"HOLY CHEESECAKES!" screamed Mandy, swerving madly to get out of the bull's way.

"It's a robotical bull!" cried Wilson as the car jerked violently to the right and the bull-bot roared right past them.

The giant bull-shaped robot swerved around, making loud screeches as its tyres scraped across the path and then the bull-bot charged at Mandy's car again. Mandy slammed a button on the steering column with her fist and the hover car levitated even higher off the ground so the bull-bot charged straight under it and past it. Mandy lowered the car and she drove it into a safe patch in the woods on the side of

the path and she and Wilson scrambled wildly out of the car. Wilson opened the boot and pulled out a long pole with two slots on either side and he pressed a button that made two long silver blades pop out of the slots. This was a bladed weapon that spins around when you throw it at the attacker and Wilson was the only Royal Fighter equipped with one. Mandy equipped herself with a belt full of bombs and the two fighters ran out to face the bull-bot. But the bull-bot was nowhere in sight, it appeared to have gone. Wilson and Mandy looked around wildly for the bull-bot but they couldn't see it anywhere. They kept their senses alert for the slightest sound as they searched for the robot. Wilson began to shake terribly, the spinning blade weapon shaking in his trembling hands. His ears drooped back against his head and he looked around nervously. Mandy however kept perfectly calm and watching Wilson act like a big chicken was making her mad.

"Wilson will you stop shaking?" said Mandy crossly "It makes you look like a wimp!"

"Sorry Mandy but that bull-bot is terrifying and the thought of it charging at us from behind is making me shake terribly." whimpered Wilson.

"Wilson, remember what Geoffrey told us." said Mandy "Don't let the scary things bother you in battle, the enemy can sense fear and if it senses fear it'll use your fear to it's advantage and destroy you so please try to be brave little Wilson."

She put a hand tenderly on the dog's shoulder and Wilson immediately stopped trembling. Her touch felt so warm and friendly to him and he loved the feeling he got from it.

"You know what Mandy, your touch makes me feel braver already." said Wilson "I'll try and think of that in battle, that'll keep my courage up."

"That's a good doggie." said Mandy teasingly "Now let's find that robot and destroy it shall we?"

But they didn't need to. The bull-bot had been hiding in the woods and lying in wait and once it found the perfect moment to strike, it

charged out of the woods, bellowing loudly. Steam billowed out of its robotical nostrils and its horns glistened like a long gleaming sword. Mandy leaped out of the way but Wilson threw the spinning blade weapon at the bull-bot and then leaped out of the way. The spinning blade just pinged harmlessly off its incredibly thick armour and spun away. The weapon impaled itself into a tree high out of reach and the bull-bot swerved around and screeched to a halt. It remained where it was and glared at Wilson and Mandy with its red optics. Then a hologram of a person in a robe with a hood over her face emitted from the bull-bot's eyes and the person spoke.

"Hello there Royal Fighters." said the robed figure "I am the Mistress of Darkness, leader of the Eggman army in Grand Metropolis and I've sent this marvellous machine to prevent you from arriving at Grand Metropolis."

Wilson and Mandy glared at the hologram and they clenched their fists.

"Do you think you can stop us Mistress?" scoffed Mandy.

"Of course I do you mousey moron." sniffed the Mistress "Egg-Taurus is very powerful and without Sonic the Hedgehog on your side you are powerless against this machine's brute strength."

"How do you know we don't have Sonic with us?" asked Wilson.

"Never you mind you nosey dog." snapped the Mistress "Have fun playing with my little pet will you? And do be careful of its horns or you'll end up skewered like a kebab on a stick. Ha, ha, ha!"

The hologram faded away and Egg-Taurus bellowed loudly. Its wheels revved up, causing massive burnouts on the path and the huge bull-like machine charged at Wilson and Mandy. The dog and mouse leaped out of the way, leaving the machine to thunder straight past them and screech to a halt. Just as it was turning around, Mandy threw a bomb at it as hard as she could. The bomb hit Egg-Taurus just above its head and it exploded upon impact. Unfortunately for Mandy though, the bomb didn't destroy its head like she hoped it would. Mandy threw another bomb at Egg-Taurus but it's incredibly thick armour withstood the blow yet again and the

bull-shaped machine had finished turning around. It charged at Mandy at top speed and roared loudly. Mandy jumped out of the machine's way but not quite fast enough. Egg-Taurus' left horn just scratched her left leg as it thundered past, causing Mandy to land rather painfully on her front and grimace in pain. The horn had left a horrible bloody cut on her leg and her trouser leg had ripped. Mandy's leg hurt so much she was having trouble standing up so she decided to lay low until she could stand again. As for Wilson, he was trying to retrieve his spinning blade weapon but it was much too high for him to reach and he couldn't climb the tree since dogs aren't very good climbers so he couldn't get it. Unless he got a leg-up or something. Then the dog had an idea. If he could get on top of Egg-Taurus and jump as high as he could then maybe he would be able to reach the weapon. The only problem was how was he going to get on top of something that moved so fast? Wilson had to stop Egg-Taurus and then climb on top of it. But was there was a less dangerous way of retrieving his weapon? Wilson thought for a moment and then he had another idea. This one was risky but what choice did he have? He needed to retrieve his weapon so he had something to fight Egg-Taurus with so he had to try whatever he could. Egg-Taurus had just finished turning around after its last charge and it looked around for Wilson and Mandy so it could charge at them. Then Wilson stood in front of the tree his weapon was stuck in and he began dancing about merrily and blowing raspberries.

"Yoo-hoo! Mr. Silly-Bull! Come and get me!" he jeered.

Egg-Taurus roared a loud frightening roar and steam billowed out of it's nostrils in the manner of a real bull. Then Egg-Taurus revved its engines, its wheels screeched and it thundered at Wilson with its optics blazing and its horns pointing at the dog, ready to skewer him alive. Wilson bent down as if he was ready to run for his life and he began saying under his breath "Wait for it, wait for it…" Once Egg-Taurus was close enough, Wilson leaped out of its way and the giant bull-bot crashed into the tree headfirst. It knocked the tree over and it landed with a crash on the ground. Wilson was pleased to see his plan had worked. Now the tree had fallen over, he could retrieve his weapon easily. Wilson ran over to the tree and he pulled the long bladed pole out of the tree. He ran up to Egg-Taurus, who was

beginning to back up and he tried to stab the robot with the spinning blade weapon. But the blade just bent against the robot's tough armour. This robot's armour was strong enough to withstand bombs and even Sonic's spin-dashes so you can imagine it was very tough. Wilson shrieked in terror at his bent weapon. One of the blades was now useless since it was bent but the other blade was good to go. Egg-Taurus continued backing up. Wilson had to bring it down and fast or it will charge again and it will be harder to stop it once it began charging. Then Wilson had another idea. True its armour was tough but maybe its optics weren't. He raised the weapon and he threw it like a javelin at one of Egg-Taurus' optics. The blade plunged neatly into the bull-bot's eye, cracking it and putting it out of function and leaving Egg-Taurus blinded on one side. Egg-Taurus screamed loudly and it shook its head wildly to get the blade out of its optic. Wilson ran over to the robot and he grabbed the weapon but Egg-Taurus jerked its head so hard it lifted him off the ground and he flung up so violently he almost let go of the weapon. Egg-Taurus continued jerking its head around madly to get the spinning blade weapon out of its optic but it couldn't shake the weapon off and since Wilson was being tossed about like a towel on a washing line in the wind, he couldn't pull it out either. Then Egg-Taurus gave an almighty jerk of the head and the only remaining blade on the weapon snapped in two as Wilson was flung over its head. The dog spiralled through the air and he landed sharply on his side. He picked himself up and stared in despair at the broken weapon. One blade was bent and the other had snapped, it was practically useless now so Wilson needed another weapon. As for Egg-Taurus, it turned around and stared Wilson down with its only remaining optic. It pointed its neck mounted Gatling guns and it began shooting at Wilson. Wilson yelped and ran like mad as he tried to avoid being shot by the Gatling guns. To make things more difficult, Egg-Taurus decided to fire its back mounted guns as well so Wilson had four guns to avoid being shot by. Wilson nearly got hit multiple times but his agility was paying off and he managed to avoid being shot. But he had a feeling he wouldn't be able to keep it up for long. As for Mandy, she had recovered from Egg-Taurus' onslaught and now she was back on her feet. She saw her friend in trouble and immediately ran over to help. She pulled out a detonator from her belt and set a timer on it. As Egg-Taurus began rotating around in an attempt to blast Wilson, Wilson ran rings around it, trying to avoid

being shot. Mandy ran over to the bull and she attached the detonator neatly onto one of Egg-Taurus' guns. Then she climbed on top of the robot and attached two more detonators to the two guns mounted on its back. Then she attached one last detonator on the other gun on the other side of its neck and she climbed off of Egg-Taurus and ran like mad. The detonators all went off at once and Egg-Taurus' Gatling guns were all destroyed in an instant. The detonators didn't do any harm to Egg-Taurus' bodywork but its weaponry had been reduced to nothing but its horns now its guns were gone. Wilson was relieved Egg-Taurus didn't have its guns anymore but that didn't mean the battle was over. Egg-Taurus still had its unstoppable charging attack and now Egg-Taurus was getting ready to charge again. It charged at Wilson and Mandy at top speed and yet again, missed them as they jumped out of the way. They felt the robot whooshing past them as they leaped clear from the robot. Before Egg-Taurus could stop and charge again, Wilson and Mandy ran for cover. Egg-Taurus rotated around and stood still, waiting for it's victims to come out and fight it so it could skewer them with its horns. Wilson and Mandy had hidden behind Mandy's car and they sat down against the car as they thought on what to do.

"That thing is unstoppable." said Mandy "We need a plan and we need it now or we'll be finished."

"How do we stop something that goes so fast and has armour so tough?" asked Wilson "I mean look at my spinning blade!"

He showed Mandy the now useless spinning blade which had a bent blade and a snapped blade.

"My spinning blade can slice through almost anything and yet it didn't do any damage whatsoever to Egg-Taurus!" cried Wilson "The only thing I can do is destroy it's optics but I've only managed to destroy one and now my weapon's in no condition to destroy the other one!"

"In that case we need to change our tactics." said Mandy "We'll need to take a sneakier approach if we want to destroy that thing. But what are we gonna do and how are we gonna destroy that thing?"

"I dunno Mandy girl." said Wilson sadly "I just don't know."

The two fighters needed a plan and fast. If they didn't come up with one sooner or later, they would never make it to Grand Metropolis…

Meanwhile, the Mistress of Darkness had been watching the whole scuffle on her monitors and she laughed at the dog and mouse's futile efforts to stand up to Egg-Taurus.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Good work Wilson and Mandy, you're putting up quite the show now aren't you?" she cackled "Watching you two run for your lives while Egg-Taurus tries to run you over is giving me great entertainment right now! It'll only be a matter of time until Egg-Taurus finally manages to flatten you two! Hee, hee, hee!"

Her fun was interrupted by the unwelcome arrival of her annoying servant bot BECK-E. She whizzed up to the Mistress and saluted her.

"Mistress, I have a status report." she said.

"Explain it then you screechy little tin can." sighed the Mistress, not happy her entertainment had been interrupted.

"Set up to Operation: Drill-For-Oil is 70% complete Madame." reported BECK-E "The main drill is stationary and the drill-bit is full functional."

"That's the best news I've heard all day." muttered the Mistress "That operation must go off without delay, Eggman is counting on me to get all that oil for him."

"I know he his Madame." said BECK-E "We won't fail him, I'm sure we won't."

"Well I know we won't fail." said the Mistress "I command possibly the strongest portion of Eggman's army and Grand Metropolis fell to us so quickly we've practically conquered it so nothing will foil this mission. Even the resistance appears to have surrendered since they haven't done a thing about it since we drove them away the

other week."

"We really are impressive aren't we?" said BECK-E.

The Mistress ignored her.

"You're dismissed BECK-E." she said "Now leave me to enjoy watching Wilson and Mandy struggle against one of Eggman's finest machines ever."

"OK." said BECK-E, trundling away on her one wheel as fast as she could go.

The Mistress put her metal hands together and she started wiggling her clawed fingers as she watched Egg-Taurus sit and wait for Wilson and Mandy to come out and fight. Egg-Taurus had been sitting there for a few minutes now and nothing had happened so it was clear that Wilson and Mandy were hiding or they had retreated. Nevertheless, the Mistress didn't know if she didn't find out so she decided to order Egg-Taurus to start searching for them. She pressed a button on the control pad and gave the order.

"Egg-Taurus, commence search mode."

On the monitor she could see Egg-Taurus had obeyed her and it deployed a searchlight from the top of its neck and a sensor beam emitted from its only remaining optic. Egg-Taurus trundled very slowly across the path, its head turning from left to right to see if it could find anything. If it found anything, the sensor beam from its eye would glow green and Egg-Taurus would attack immediately. Wilson and Mandy would have to be very subtle now because if Egg-Taurus found them, they would be mincemeat. The Mistress sat back in her throne and twiddled her claws.

"Alright Wilson and Mandy, if you're both so smart then think your way out of this one." she purred to herself.

Egg-Taurus patrolled the woodland, looking for Wilson and Mandy. Its spot light rotated from left to right every few seconds and its sensor beam swept across the path in attempts to find the hiding

Mobians. Wilson and Mandy kept low behind Mandy's car and watched as Egg-Taurus went back and forth with its spotlights and sensor twitching beam every few seconds to see what it could find. Its spotlight pointed at the silver hover car that was parked in the woods but Egg-Taurus didn't bother with the car since it wasn't looking for a car and it trundled away. The moment Egg-Taurus trundled away, Wilson and Mandy began whispering to each other.

"That thing's got spotlights and sensor beams at the ready." whispered Mandy "I think it's trying to find us."

"So what do we do now?" whispered Wilson "If it finds us we're done for!"

"I think I know how to stop that thing." said Mandy, pulling Wilson close to her so she could whisper in his ear. "You see, Egg-Taurus is built to run on smooth ground right?"

"Right." whispered Wilson.

"So if we can get that thing to topple over, we can attack it from the underneath where it'll be vulnerable and then it's out of commission." whispered Mandy "I'm sure it'll work."

"But how do we get it to topple over?" asked Wilson "Should we trick it into coming into the woods where the ground isn't very smooth and hope we can get it to topple over?"

"That's precisely what I was thinking." said Mandy "Now you stay here while I catch its attention. When you see me coming, you run while Egg-Taurus chases me and then me and you will try to get it to tip over."

"OK Mandy." said Wilson, holding her hand and giving it a gentle squeeze "Let's hope this works or we're dead meat."

"I hope it works too." said Mandy, giving Wilson's hand a gentle squeeze back.

Mandy got up onto her feet and she crept out from behind the car. Then she tip-toed ever so quietly (well she is a mouse after all) out of the woods and onto the path. Egg-Taurus was far down the path

with its back turned so it wouldn't see Mandy unless it turned around and came back. In order to catch its attention, Mandy called out to it.

"Hey! Egg-Taurus! I'm over here!" she called out to the machine.

Egg-Taurus had excellent hearing. Its hearing so great that it could be sitting in the middle of London and it would have heard a call all the way from Scotland. Egg-Taurus spun around and its spotlight fixed straight ahead of it. It couldn't see Mandy because it was far down the path but it knew she was there because she had called to it. Egg-Taurus snorted loudly, steam billowing out of its nostrils, it's only remaining optic went red with fury and it charged down the path at a thundering speed. Mandy saw it coming and waited until she was sure she was in Egg-Taurus's sight. Egg-Taurus was half-way away by the time she finally decided to run for her life. She dived into the woods as fast as her legs would carry her. Egg-Taurus swerved loudly to the left and it followed Mandy into the woods. Wilson saw the two of them coming and he ran for his life as well. The two Mobians ran as fast as they could from the giant bull-shaped machine that was hot on their tails. The one advantage they were having over Egg-Taurus is that the woods didn't have level ground like a smooth path did so Egg-Taurus was noticeably going slower then usual when chasing them through the woods. Not to mention trees kept getting in the way so Egg-Taurus ended up crashing into a tree and knocking it over which stopped for a good amount of time only for it to continue the chase shortly afterwards. Egg-Taurus tried to pick up speed but the uneven ground wasn't helping much so Egg-Taurus could only get up to half speed before being slowed down by the uneven ground. Wilson and Mandy looked over their shoulders to see where the bull-bot was only to see they were pretty far from it. They stopped and stared at the machine.

"I'll give you one thing Mandy, you picked a good place for it to chase us." said Wilson "It can hardly keep up with us on this uneven ground."

"I hadn't anticipated that." said Mandy "But that's one thing in our favour. I hope there's something in the ground that's so uneven it will topple over."

"Maybe this will help?" suggested Wilson, pointing to a tree-stump that stuck out like a sore thumb in the ground.

If Egg-Taurus bumped into that across the side, the tree-stump would easily topple it over. Mandy smiled at Wilson.

"I think that'll work perfectly." said Mandy "All we need to do is get Egg-Taurus over here."

They heard Egg-Taurus trundling and wobbling through the woods not far behind them. Wilson and Mandy turned around to see Egg-Taurus heading away from them with it's spotlight sweeping the area in search of them. Wilson cupped his hands around his mouth and he called out to Egg-Taurus.

"Hey bull-bot, come and get us!" he jeered.

Egg-Taurus' head turned to one side and its spotlight shone over Wilson. Wilson shielded his eyes from the bright light. With its prey in sight, Egg-Taurus bellowed loudly and its wheels revved up and it charged straight at the dog. Wilson immediately ran for it, squealing like a girl as Egg-Taurus thundered after him. Wilson ran past the tree-stump that he was trying to bait Egg-Taurus into running into. Egg-Taurus continued thundering after Wilson but it struck a large bit of tree trunk that stuck up from the ground and the entire front end of the robot went upwards. When it came back down Egg-Taurus bounced slightly and then it landed straight on top of the tree-trunk. It landed rather awkwardly on the tree-trunk and due to the position of the tree trunk it landed on, it overbalanced and toppled onto its side with a thud. Wilson and Mandy beamed at the sight of the toppled over Egg-Taurus and they did a high-five.

"Yes! It worked!" exclaimed Mandy "That robot won't be getting up anytime soon!"

"Agreed." said Wilson "Now let's destroy it so Dr. Eggman or the Mistress of Darkness can't use it anymore!"

Unfortunately, their moment of triumph was short lived. Wilson and Mandy advanced on Egg-Taurus but they stopped dead in their tracks after the bull-bot snorted at them. Then one of its side

compartments began to slowly open and in doing so, it began to lift Egg-Taurus back onto its wheels! The robot fully self-righted itself and it glared at Wilson and Mandy angrily. The two Mobians leaped back in horror.

"I don't believe it!" cried Wilson "That thing can get back up?"

"We topple it over and it's still able to come back at us!" shrieked Mandy "We need a change of plan and fast!"

But Egg-Taurus' ability to self-right wasn't the only thing shocking about it. Seeing as it couldn't catch them on uneven ground, Egg-Taurus's wheels slid neatly inside its sockets and the whole robot lifted slightly off the ground! Egg-Taurus had the ability to hover as well as charge at fast speeds and self-right! This made Wilson and Mandy worry even more.

"Great, it can hover?" shrieked Mandy "So much for uneven ground giving us an advantage over it!"

"Now we'll never defeat it!" moaned Wilson "It's bound to catch us if we run for it now!"

Egg-Taurus charged at the two Mobians in mid-air as fast as it could go. Wilson and Mandy dropped to the ground so the bull-bot hurtled over their heads. It turned around sharply but it crashed into a tree and knocked it over. This shook the bull-bot slightly but not much. Wilson and Mandy got to their feet and ran for it before Egg-Taurus could charge again. Egg-Taurus recovered from it's collision with the tree and charged at Wilson and Mandy. The two Mobians ran by a tree but Egg-Taurus crashed straight into it, causing the tree to fall straight over. Mandy climbed up a tree in an attempt to hide from Egg-Taurus and launch a counter attack but Egg-Taurus saw her and it charged into the tree head-first. Its hard head bashed against the tree and knocked it over with Mandy on it! The tree crashed against some other trees but it didn't knock the other trees over so Mandy was saved from a nasty fall. But the collision with the other trees shook her so much she almost fell off but she held on tight. Egg-Taurus prepared for another attack, an attack that was guaranteed to spell doom for Mandy. Wilson saw Mandy was in trouble and he decided to do something quickly in order to save her.

He picked up a stone and threw it at Egg-Taurus. The stone pinged harmlessly off its thick steel body armour but Egg-Taurus's attention was diverted from Mandy to Wilson now. Before Egg-Taurus could even twitch, Wilson immediately ran for his life. Egg-Taurus roared loudly and it hovered through the air after Wilson, its horns ready to skewer him. Now she was safe, Mandy climbed down the tree and ran after Egg-Taurus. Seeing as how the giant bull-bot could hover, Mandy had an idea on how to take the giant machine out once and for all. It was a risky move but Mandy knew she had no other options so she had to try her idea or Egg-Taurus would kill her and Wilson. Mandy kept running behind Egg-Taurus as it chased after Wilson and she pulled a detonator off her belt. She knew that bombs had no effect on it's bodywork due to how tough it is but she had a feeling the underside wouldn't be as solid as the rest of the body so she decided to try and attach the detonator under Egg-Taurus and hopefully destroy it. The only problem was Egg-Taurus was hard to catch due to how fast it was in flight and it wouldn't stay still for long enough for Mandy to catch up to it. Then there was another problem. Egg-Taurus had chased Wilson out into the open so now it didn't need to hover anymore so it deployed its wheels and rolled after Wilson, who was still running like mad. Since Egg-Taurus wasn't hovering anymore, Mandy couldn't get underneath it and attach the detonator to it. If she were to destroy it, she would have to change tactics and she had the perfect tactic change. Wilson kept running as Egg-Taurus thundered after him with its horns glistening and waiting to skewer him. Unfortunately, the dog was beginning to get tired and he began to slow down. Egg-Taurus began to catch up to the slowing dog and it prepared to wallop him head-first. Wilson just had enough strength in him to leap out of the way of Egg-Taurus just before it could hit him and the robot hurtled past him at the speed of a charging rhino. Before Egg-Taurus turned around to charge again, Wilson crawled away from the path so he could find a place to hide and catch his breath. Egg-Taurus rotated back around and was about to charge until it realized that Wilson had gone. But it spotted Mandy further up the path and it decided to charge at her instead. Egg-Taurus snorted loudly, steam billowing from it's nostrils as it did so; it revved its wheels up and roared loudly. Then it charged at full speed at Mandy Mouse. Mandy set the timer on the detonator to six seconds and she placed the detonator down on the ground as Egg-Taurus began roaring towards her. Mandy ran for it

as Egg-Taurus neared the detonator. Egg-Taurus ran over the detonator but it didn't get any further. The detonator went off and exploded right underneath it before it could finish running over it and the explosion tore straight through the vulnerable underbelly of Egg-Taurus and erupted straight out the top of the machine. Egg-Taurus screeched loudly as smoke billowed out the top of it, fire blazed out its nostrils and mouth and its head went up in flames. Its wheels fell off and it collapsed to the ground in a smoking, smouldering wreck of scorched steal and frying machinery. Wilson, who had just gotten his breath back, ran over to Egg-Taurus and was surprised to see the bull-bot in flames. Mandy picked herself up and laughed joyfully at her brilliant success. She punched the air and whooped with joy.

"Yes! Whoo-hoo! That was brilliant! Egg-Taurus goes up in flames!" she screeched "What a triumph!"

"How did you do that?" asked Wilson "I thought bombs had no effect on it."

"I know." said Mandy "But I guessed the underside would be the weakest part since that's usually the case on a robot and I put a detonator on the ground and set the timer just right so it would explode the moment Egg-Taurus ran over it. The explosion tore through the underside of the robot and completely destroyed it! Brilliant isn't it?"

"Mandy, you're the most brilliant girl I've ever met." said Wilson, grasping her into a hug and the two shared a quick kiss with each other.

This was the first time since they'd met that Wilson and Mandy had kissed and they were so amazed they were doing it they didn't want to stop this loving moment but they had to since they had a mission right now. They broke up the kiss and laughed nervously to each other.

"Well…" said Mandy, trying to shake off the loving tender moment they just had "Now Egg-Taurus is down, let's get to Grand Metropolis and do the duty we've been assigned for."

"I do hope no more trouble comes." said Wilson "I'm getting enough

of this as it is."

"After a failure like that, I don't think Dr. Eggman will even bother to send anymore robots after us." said Mandy "Once we arrive at Grand Metropolis, we'll teach him a lesson or two."

Wilson and Mandy ran over to the hover car that was still parked in the woods and they climbed into it. Mandy started the car and the car hovered out of its hiding place and hovered down the path and continued its way to Grand Metropolis. Wilson looked over his shoulder to see the blazing wreck of Egg-Taurus and then he turned his attention back to what was ahead of the car. He pulled the map out and studied it again. The path was beginning to look more like the directions on the map so they had been going the right way all along.

"Hey Mandy, you were right to choose to go right." said Wilson "Because this way looks more like the way the map's depicting the way to Grand Metropolis so we're on the right path."

"That's good news." said Mandy "Once I get to Grand Metropolis, I am going to make that Mistress of Darkness person pay dearly for delaying our journey. I wonder who is she and why she's working for Dr. Eggman?"

"Beats me." said Wilson "I do hope she won't be too powerful for us."

"Wilson, good triumphs over evil in the end." said Mandy "That stupid Mistress person won't stop us from saving the city from further destruction and capture."

"I second that." said Wilson "Me and you are gonna make her pay big time!"

He cupped his hand around his fist and put on a brave face. Mandy giggled at him.

"That's more like it Wilson!" she said "Your team spirit is back! I can tell you're looking forward to this aren't you?"

"I am." said Wilson "I'm looking forward to foiling whatever plan that

Mistress of Darkness girl has in mind."

And that plan was to drill oil and Wilson and Mandy would soon find that out when they arrived to the city…

The Mistress of Darkness roared in fury at Egg-Taurus's defeat and she blasted the computer monitors to pieces with her laser claws. She thumped the arms of her throne angrily and she growled to herself. She had been enjoying watching Egg-Taurus make things difficult for Wilson and Mandy and now the bull-bot had been defeated, it made her shriek with rage.

"Curse those stupid Royal Fighters!" she screamed "Egg-Taurus was one of my strongest machines on offer! How did they defeat it?"

"I did warn you it wasn't ready yet." said BECK-E smugly "If you waited until Egg-Taurus was ready, they wouldn't have defeated it so easily since it would be armoured everywhere, including the underside and it would have had more weapons to use…"

"Oh will you shut your annoying mouth up you obnoxious little pipsqueak?" snarled the Mistress, trying to blast BECK-E with her laser claws but missing by inches.

BECK-E squealed and whizzed out of the room as fast as she could before the Mistress could zap her. The door closed shut behind her with a loud clang that echoed around the room for a few seconds. After BECK-E left, the Mistress sat back down in her throne and twiddled her claws.

"Wilson and Mandy's resourcefulness is to be commended." she said to herself "But those robots I sent were just a test. Let's see how well they do in battle against me and my whole robot army under the command of Dr. Eggman! I bet they won't feel so lucky then will they?"

And with that she let out a sinister, evil, witchy sounding cackle that filled the entire room from top to bottom. Despite the two failures the Mistress had, she had one opponent that was sure to destroy the

Royal Fighters…herself…

The Malicious Metropolis Masquerade 3

Part 3: Finally Made It

It was dark by the time Wilson and Mandy finally arrived at Grand Metropolis. They pulled in on the outskirts of the city where Bostock and Mortimer were waiting for them. They were just about to leave and return to headquarters until they saw headlights in the distance and to their delight the help they'd sent for had come at last. Wilson and Mandy climbed out of the car and stood to attention. Bostock walked up to them and greeted them both with a handshake each.

"Greetings you two." he said happily "So you've made it at last. That's a relief; I thought the help we requested wasn't going to come."

"We're so sorry for the delay sir." said Mandy, saluting to Bostock "We got held up by some Eggman robots along the way."

"D'ya know Egg-Taurus at all?" asked Wilson.

"Oh we know that machine very well." said Mortimer "It led a rampage through the city before we damaged it enough to be put out of action the other day."

"Well that was one of the robots that attacked us." said Wilson "We managed to destroy it though so don't worry about it attacking us again because it's down and out."

"Splendid!" Bostock congratulated happily "You've only just arrived here and already you've done us a big favour! Egg-Taurus was a menace to us all and now it's gone, it can't do anymore damage to the city or us! I don't know how to thank you two."

"No need to. We're just doing our duty." said Mandy "We're the Royal Fighters from Mobotropolis you requested to help out and the Acorn family sent us since we were the only ones available at the time."

"I see." said Bostock, a little glum on the fact Sonic the Hedgehog, Geoffrey St. John or Bunnie Rabbot weren't any of the fighters that had come to help his troops "Well I'm sure you two are great fighters since they sent you to help us."

"Oh we're great fighters alright!" boasted Wilson "We've had combat training from Geoffrey St. John! And we are a one robot wrecking crew me and Mandy are!" he added, doing a few kicks and punches to the air.

"Are you now?" said Bostock with a tone of interest in his voice "We'll be looking forward to seeing you two in action when we make our next move. By the way, we've forgotten to introduce ourselves." he realized "I'm General Bostock of the Metropolis Royal Fighters."

"And I'm Corporal Mortimer, Bostock's right hand man." said Mortimer.

"My name is Mandy Mouse." said Mandy.

"And my name is Wilson the Dog." said Wilson.

"Nice to meet you two." said Bostock kindly "Now would you two care to join us for dinner back at headquarters? We were just about to return to headquarters and have it until you arrived."

"Well now that you mention it, I am kinda hungry." said Mandy "It's funny how when in a fight, you never realize how hungry you are until you stop."

"I'm starving." said Wilson, rubbing his rumbling stomach "What's on the menu?"

"You'll see when we get there." said Bostock "When we return to headquarters, we'll eat and discuss the current status of Grand Metropolis and the efforts my troops have made since we joined the Royal Fighters Service."

So the four Mobians headed off to Royal Fighter headquarters which was located on the outskirts of the city.

The Royal Fighter headquarters was a big office block that stood in a lonely place outside the city. It did not carry the logo of the Royal Fighters Service on it since Bostock wanted to maintain a low profile so to anyone passing by, it looked like an office block but inside, it looked like a military base. The base was full of soldiers all wearing traditional army green combat fatigues and tin-hats and weapons they had consisted of traditional army weapons such as guns, bombs and bazookas. Right now, it was dinner time and the whole army was enjoying a refreshing bowl of chicken soup with a slice of bread to dunk in it. The dining room had a long brown table that had enough room for seventeen people. Bostock sat at the end of the table with Mortimer sitting beside him and the soldiers would sit anywhere else. The soldiers had already eaten by the time Bostock had returned so the only ones at the table were him, Mortimer, Wilson and Mandy. Wilson and Mandy enjoyed their dinners quite a lot. Wilson had already wolfed his down and Mandy picked the bowl up and sipped the remains of her soup. She let out a satisfied sigh and licked her lips clean.

"How was the meal you two?" asked Bostock.

Wilson's immediate response was "Please sir, may I have some more?"

He held out the empty bowl and did the ever adorable puppy-dog eyes. Mortimer took Wilson's bowl away and took it to the kitchen to fill it up with seconds.

"That was the nicest chicken soup I've had in a while." said Mandy politely "Thank you General."

"It was our pleasure you two." said Bostock "After all, a good soldier needs a good meal to satisfy his hunger long enough to do battle. It's no good sending out soldiers who haven't had a decent meal since they'll be too hungry to fight."

"I couldn't agree more General." said Mandy "I feel recharged already after that meal."

Mortimer returned to the dining room with Wilson's seconds and he put the bowl down in front of Wilson. Wilson immediately began

eating it and Mandy looked at him with a smile on her face.

"That's Wilson for you." said Mandy "When food's involved, he's one happy doggy."

"I can see that." said Mortimer with a chuckle "He could probably eat for the whole planet with an appetite like that! The soldiers only need one bowlful and they're full up!"

Bostock finished sipping the remains of his soup out of his bowl and he put the bowl back down on the table.

"OK you two, it's time to get down to business." said Bostock with a tone of importance in his voice.

Mandy sat still and kept her eyes on Bostock so he knew she was paying attention. Wilson stopped eating and looked at Bostock, wondering what he had to say. Bostock cleared his throat and spoke.

"You maybe wondering why we've sent out a distress signal, requesting help from other fighters." he said.

"Well I am sort of." said Mandy "I'm also wondering why compared to the other cities on Mobius, Grand Metropolis is such a wreck. It looks like a bomb hit it."

Bostock fell into silence for a few seconds before speaking again.

"When King Max gave out the formation of the Royal Fighters Service, Grand Metropolis didn't get the message at first." he explained "And when we finally did get the message and start formulating an army, Grand Metropolis was beginning to get overwhelmed by Dr. Eggman's attacks. Since we formed our army much later then the others did, we could barely keep up with the onslaught of Eggman's army and any progress we've made only slows down his triumph."

"So that's why you need back-up then." said Mandy "Your army is so overwhelmed it needs the help of another fighter group to gain an edge on Eggman's robotical army."

"That is correct." said Bostock "And I'm pleased to have two fighters from the Mobotropolis group since your team has the best record of the Royal Fighters out there."

"I wouldn't be too surprised if that was because we have Sonic the Hedgehog." said Wilson "Sonic's the best fighter of us all."

"Tis a pity that Sonic wasn't available for us." said Mortimer "I bet he would have been a great help to us in this crusade right now."

"But I'm sure you two will provide excellent help for us." said Bostock "If you've been trained to fight by Geoffrey St. John then you two will be excellent in combat I'm sure of that."

"And excellent in combat we are." said Mandy "So, what's your army's next move?"

"Tomorrow morning, we are going into the heart of Eggman's territory and foil a drilling operation that is being set up there." said Bostock "It's vital we stop it before it activates."

"Why is that then?" asked Wilson, taking a spoonful of soup "Is this drilling operation dangerous?"

"It looks very dangerous." said Bostock "And I'm sure it's as dangerous as it looks. It's a huge monster of a drill and if that thing drills into the ground it will bring what's left of the city to the ground and cause chaos everywhere! We must stop it for the sake of the people and the city!"

"What are the robots drilling for anyway?" asked Mandy.

"Oil." said Mortimer grimly, his mouth turned down at the corners at the mere mention of the word "They've found a huge amount of oil underneath the city and they want to drill into the ground and use all that oil to power Eggman's machines. Robots run on oil after all and if he has that much oil for his army, he'll never run out! We must not let those insidious machines get that oil!"

"I see." said Mandy "Who's in charge of the operation? Eggman no doubt."

"Surprisingly it isn't." said Bostock lowly, his eyes narrowing to slits of hatred as if the person he was thinking of was a disgusting little viper "Dr. Eggman is elsewhere in the world so he's left one of his top agents the Mistress of Darkness in charge of all operations here."

"We've heard about that Mistress person." said Wilson grimly "She was the one who sent Egg-Taurus to get us."

"The Mistress is extremely dangerous." continued Bostock "She has power greater then I've ever known and she took five of my men out with one laser blast the other day. I wonder where she got all this power from. It's defiantly unnatural for a Mobian so she must be a machine, a very powerful machine indeed."

Wilson and Mandy looked at each other fearfully. The Mistress could take out five people in one blast? She certainly sounded like a deadly foe didn't she? Deadlier then any foe ever encountered before! Now they could easily see why Dr. Eggman left the Mistress of Darkness in charge of Grand Metropolis. They turned their attention back to Bostock.

"So if we've got this straight, you want us to help you stop a drilling operation and hopefully stop the Mistress of Darkness." said Mandy.

"Affirmative." said Bostock.

"But how do we stop someone who can take out five people in one shot?" asked Wilson worriedly "We'll be toast if she gets us!"

"No we won't Wilson." said Mandy "We are strong, we are tough and we are fast. We will kick that Mistress's sorry butt into the next continent when we attack tomorrow morning!"

"Let us hope you are right." said Mortimer with a disapproving tone in his voice "Because if you can't stop the Mistress then we may as well give up all hope of ever defeating Dr. Eggman and saving Grand Metropolis from catastrophe."

Wilson and Mandy nodded in an understanding manner. They were the only fighters available to help the Royal Fighters of Grand

Metropolis and if they couldn't help the fighters out then no one could so they knew that this was probably going to be the toughest mission of their lives and it would take every ounce of their strength and intelligence to survive the planned heist on the drilling operation tomorrow…

Meanwhile, the Mistress of Darkness was overseeing the finishing touches to the giant drill that was being specially constructed and put together just for this operation. The drill was enormous and it was supported by giant scaffoldings that stood tall above most other buildings in Grand Metropolis. Its drill-bit was easily big enough to drill straight through the top of a skyscraper and split it in half. The drill was suspended ten feet above the ground by axels on both sides that were connected to sliding tracks that allowed it to move up and down or rotate vertically so the drill-bit would be pointing up at the sky. The Mistress had great pleasure admiring this great achievement in the world of machinery and she couldn't wait to use it tomorrow morning. Once activated, the drill would drill straight down into the ground, cause an earthquake that would shake the city to the ground and unearth all the oil that had been detected under the ground the drill was stationed above. The Mistress was so pleased with the drilling operation she had been setting up for months one end that she was cackling with excitement. She could almost imagine Dr. Eggman's expression when she told him about all the oil she had unearthed. She rubbed her metallic hands evilly at the thought of the drill in action.

"Oooh, hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" she cackled "This is easily my finest achievement ever! I have constructed a drill that could easily dig to the planet's core and it'll be used to unearth an ocean of oil that awaits us under our feet! Dr. Eggman will be so amazed with my efforts he'll reward me big time! I can almost imagine his face when I deliver all this oil to him!"

As for the robots working on the drill, they had just finished welding the axels to either side of the drill and the axels had just been attached to the slider track. Now that was done, one of the worker bots climbed into the drill's cockpit and began testing the drill's movement. The cockpit was full of controls that activated the drill's

enormous drill-bit or made the drill itself move up and down or rotate. The robot pushed on the levers and the drill began to slowly slide down to the ground. Its drill-bit wasn't spinning because it wasn't finished yet but it would be in time for the operation tomorrow. The drill lowered down and down until the tip of the drill poked the ground below it. Then the robot pulled the levers back and the drill slid back up to its original height. It was clear everything was working the way it should and that was good news to the Mistress. She smiled with joy under her huge hood.

"The drill works." she said to herself "That's a good sign, all our hard work is paying off so far. Hopefully when the drill-bit is finished, it will work as marvellously as it should and the drill will drill its way into the ground and unearth all the oil we've detected underground!"

Her moment of delight was ruined by the unwelcome arrival of her annoying servant bot BECK-E though. She trundled up nervously behind the robed mistress and with a trembling clawed finger; she tapped the Mistress lightly on the shoulder. The Mistress immediately turned around and stared at BECK-E icily with her cold evil eyes. BECK-E shrieked and leaped back in the sense she thought the Mistress was going to blast her to pieces.

"What do you want now BECK-E?" she snarled "Can't I have any peace around here?"

"S-s-sorry Mistress." said BECK-E "It's j-j-just I-I've had a report from our undercover agent a minute ago."

"What has he reported to you?" asked the Mistress sharply "Anything of interest?"

"Just that the Royal Fighters are preparing to make their move on us tomorrow morning." reported BECK-E "He also said they're going to try and foil Operation: Drill-For-Oil before we can put it into action."

"And I bet Wilson and Mandy are part of this heist." said the Mistress with the snap of the clawed fingers.

"Correct." said BECK-E "How did you guess?"

"Well there's the fact Bostock and his wormy crew sent that distress signal to ask for help from other fighters and Wilson and Mandy were the ones who responded so that's how I knew." said the Mistress "But why should I care? Tomorrow will be no different. We will squash that poor excuse for a resistance and the drilling-operation will commence without delay. You're dismissed BECK-E and I don't want to see you until tomorrow morning."

"Yes Mistress." said BECK-E "See you tomorrow Mistress."

And with that, she wheeled away on her one wheel and disappeared from sight. The Mistress turned back to the giant drill that loomed above everybody and she grinned wickedly to herself.

"You will not stop this drill Royal Fighters." she purred to herself "And even if you do, you'll have a nasty surprise coming your way that will ensure your deaths and the drill will be put back into action…"

Her voice trailed off as she cackled darkly to herself. Tomorrow was going to be a big day for her and the Royal Fighters and it would all end with one side in a blazing victory and one side in a smouldering defeat. And which side would be victorious would soon be found out as tomorrow neared and neared as time ticked slowly by for the next day…

The next morning arrived and the Royal Fighters were making their move. The soldiers had all suited up and armed themselves especially for this mission. They had guns with lasers that caused robots to rust upon impact and detonators powerful enough to scale a bungalow. Bostock and Mortimer armed themselves with long barrelled hand-held pistols and Wilson and Mandy were armed with a belt full of detonators and a brand new spinning blade weapon given to them courtesy of Bostock. After suiting up for combat, Bostock led the troops to the Mistress of Darkness's base which wasn't located very far from their headquarters. It was merely a twenty minute walk away from their headquarters to the Mistress's base and they were there. The base was a large triangular shaped building painted black to symbolize darkness and it carried the logo

of Dr. Eggman in the centre of the front wall. The troops all took cover behind some debris from a destroyed building and they watched all the Eggman robots marching to and fro around the perimeter of the base. Some robots carried enormous hammers, some carried an insane amount of firearm weaponry and some carried swords. There were a lot of robots there and getting past them was going to be easier said then done. Wilson shivered at the sight of so many robots but Mandy put her hand on his shoulder to calm him down.

"OK men, security is extremely tight here it seems." said Bostock "We're going to have to be very careful here or we're going to be dead meat if those robots get us."

"Yes sir!" said the troops with a salute.

"I hope you two know what to do when faced with an Eggman army." said Mortimer, looking sharply at Wilson and Mandy.

"Oh we've had eight months worth of practice." said Mandy casually "We know what we're doing when we're against a bunch of tin-heads like them other there."

"Y-y-yeah. We know w-what we're d-doing." said Wilson, stammering a little.

"OK then, just don't lose your heads out there." said Mortimer.

"So Bostock, when do we attack?" asked Mandy.

"We attack when I say so." said Bostock "Right now we wait and see what those tin-heads are doing."

With that said, the whole army remained hidden and Bostock watched the army of robots still marching to and fro around the perimeter. Then the doors to the base opened and all the robots stopped marching and they stood to attention and saluted. The Mistress of Darkness emerged from the darkness of her base and into the brightness of the sunlight, not that it mattered since her hood was keeping her eyes shielded from the light. The Mistress walked by the saluting robots and after reaching the end of the line,

she turned around and spoke to the robots.

"Now listen here you metal meanies." she announced "Operation: Drill-For-Oil begins in ten minutes. I expect you all at your stations in exactly that amount of time. Understood?"

The robots all nodded in unison.

"Excellent." said the Mistress "Now, is there any news at all?"

"Yes there is Mistress!" exclaimed her tutu wearing servant bot BECK-E from the back of the crowd.

"Come forward then." sighed the Mistress.

BECK-E wheeled her way through the crowd of robots and came up to the Mistress.

"Robot Capture Squad Delta 5.67 has captured a group of Mobians for us to roboticize." said BECK-E "They should be arriving any minute now."

"That's good news to hear BECK-E." said the Mistress "And as a matter of facts, I can hear them coming now."

The Royal Fighters all looked to their right and they saw a fleet of hover cars driven by robots and all carrying captured Mobians. The captured Mobians all wore laser cuffs and they were not pleased to be here at all. They shook with fear as the capture squad brought them to the Mistress. The lead hover car halted and the driver saluted the Mistress. The Mobians all stepped down from the car and awaited their doom. The Mistress advanced on one Mobian, who was a young mole-rat at the age of only five and he shook so much at the sight of her you would have thought he was cold or something. The Mistress gripped him by the face and observed him up and down and then sniffed at him.

"Aaaah, fresh meat." she said coldly "Fresh meat that'll soon be turned into fresh metal. You horrible bunch will make a fine group of robots for Dr. Eggman's army I can assure that. Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The captured Mobians shook even more at the terrifying Mistress.

The Mistress let go of the mole-rat's face and pointed at the capture squad.

"Take them to the roboticizer you worms!" she ordered.

The squad of capture bots obeyed and they got out of their cars and led the terrified Mobians away into the base, where the roboticizer was and where they would end up. The Royal Fighters watched this appalling scene unfold before their eyes and they were furious at what had been going on.

"Ooh I could get my hands on that jerk of a Mistress!" said Mandy angrily.

"Um…me too!" said Wilson, putting on a brave face.

"Settle down you two." said Bostock hastily "We need a strategy first and then we go into battle."

"I have one." said Mortimer "Me, you and the soldiers will all save the captured Mobians from being roboticized and Wilson and Mandy can take out the giant drill. Does that sound like a plan Bostock?"

"I think it's a plausible idea." said Bostock "So Wilson and Mandy, are you two up to the task of taking out the one thing that threatens to bring this city to the ground?"

"Sure we are." said Mandy "Aren't we Wilson boy?"

"Um…yes, yes we are." lied Wilson, he was sweating like mad now.

"Then it's settled." said Bostock "Mortimer, the boys and I will save the captives and you two will destroy the drill. Now get ready to go in three…" he put up three fingers and put them down as he counted.

"Two…One…GO!" he bellowed.

Bostock, Mortimer and all the soldiers burst out from their hiding place and they ran up to the army of robots that were escorting the captives away with their guns in hand and ready to fire. The Mistress spotted them and blasted at them with her hands. She missed the soldiers by inches and they began to open fire on the robot army.

The Mistress didn't want to be shot so she ran for it while she had the chance.

"Robots, get them!" she ordered "And don't let them get anywhere near the drill!"

The robots obeyed and they ran into battle with their weapons blazing and their optics burning with rage. A hammer-wielding robot tried to squash Bostock flat with its hammer but Bostock dodged the blow and shot the robot with his pistol. The robot was blasted in the torso and the moment it was shot, its entire body began to rust and crumble away into nothingness. The robot was reduced to a rusty pile of robot parts. The Mistress had witnessed this and she was horrified to say the least at that kind of weaponry.

"They have lasers that make robots rust when they're shot at?" she shrieked "Those stupid fighters are getting better at their stuff aren't they? Robots, get them and be careful of those guns!"

The robots deployed and primed their weapons and they ran into battle, roaring mechanical roars that could make anyone jump in fright. Bostock and his men immediately began opening fire on the oncoming robot army but the robots were being more aware of them this time round after seeing what their guns could do so they dodged the shots the fighters fired at them. The whole perimeter was full of flying laser blasts, zooming missiles, swarming robots and fighting soldiers all shooting at one another in one big battle. One robot ran up to a soldier who didn't see it coming in time and with one swing of its giant sword, it sliced the poor soldier in half. The soldier's body collapsed lifeless to the ground in two halves. But sword-wielding bot didn't get a moment to celebrate since Mortimer sneaked up behind it and shot it in the back with his pistol. The robot rusted to pieces and its sword crumbled into tiny little bits of rusty metal. A robot wielding a mace tried to whack Mortimer with its mace and squash him flat but Mortimer heard it coming and he shot it twice, one in the legs and the other in the chest. The robot rusted to pieces and its mace fell to the ground with a clang. Mortimer tried to pick up the giant mace but it was a huge weapon and it was extremely heavy since it was built for a big strong robot so he couldn't pick it up. Bostock saw Mortimer trying to pick the mace up so he ran over to Mortimer and helped him lift the giant weapon up off the ground.

A golden robot with two missile launchers, one on each shoulder, saw Bostock and Mortimer with a dead robot's mace and it fired two missiles at them. Bostock and Mortimer began to spin around while holding the mace so they began to spin the mace around in a big circle. One missile missed the two chipmunks and it exploded behind them after striking the ground but the other was heading towards them at blinding speed. Bostock and Mortimer continued spinning the mace around and they were spinning the mace around so fast that the mace hit the missile that was heading towards them and they knocked the missile away. The missile hit a chick-legged robot armed with Gatling guns and the robot was blown to pieces by the missile. Then Bostock and Mortimer stopped spinning around and they charged at the missile launcher robot with the mace above their heads. They ran up to the robot and the moment they were a couple of feet away, they both threw their arms down and the mace was sent flying directly into the middle of the robot. The mace's sharp spikes and tough hide penetrated the robot's tough armour and the robot was sent falling onto its back with sparks flying everywhere. Bostock and Mortimer both whooped with joy. More robots advanced on them with their weapons at the ready but Bostock and Mortimer were ready for them with their deadly pistols. They began opening fire on the advancing robots and any robot that had been hit by them instantly rusted to pieces.

Wilson and Mandy watched the entire fight from the hiding place and they were spellbound by the entire scene unfolding before them like an action movie at the cinema. The reason they weren't doing anything yet is because they were waiting until they were certain the robots were oblivious to their presence and then they would sneak over to the drill and begin the sabotage work. As far as they could tell, every single robot appeared to be fighting the army of Royal Fighters so the coast was clear for them to come out and begin their work. Wilson and Mandy got to their feet and they crept out of their hiding place and sneaked towards the giant drill that loomed above nearly everything in the city. Unfortunately, the dog and mouse's presence didn't go unnoticed. BECK-E, who was standing back from the battle with the Mistress, spotted them on the outskirts of the battlefield and she watched Wilson and Mandy sneak over to the drill. She immediately knew what they were up to so she panicked.

"Mistress!" squeaked BECK-E "Wilson and Mandy are sneaking over to the drill! I think they're trying to sabotage it!"

The Mistress stopped watching the battle and she looked in the direction BECK-E was looking in. Surely enough, she spotted Wilson and Mandy running up to the unguarded drill as fast as their legs would carry them. Her eyes widened in surprise and she clenched her metal fists in anger.

"So this whole fight is a distraction so Wilson and Mandy can sabotage the drill?" she growled "Well I'm not letting them get away with that! BECK-E! Get them!"

"You get them you lazy lump!" snapped BECK-E rudely.

The Mistress glared at her obnoxious servant bot angrily and she grabbed the top of the tutu wearing robot's head and she dug her metal claws in to it to make her squeal.

"BECK-E, you are my servant bot and you do what I say!" snarled the Mistress "Now you get your disobedient self over to that drill and stop those two heathens from sabotaging the drill or the whole operation will be in jeopardy! Is that well and perfectly understood ye of little loyalty?"

"Y-y-yes Mistress." whimpered BECK-E "I'll g-g-get to it immediately."

The Mistress let go of BECK-E and the pink robot zoomed up to the giant drill at top speed on her one wheel. As for Wilson and Mandy, they had reached the drill and they began to climb up the ladders that were attached to the scaffolding on either side of the drill. Wilson was reluctant to climb since he was afraid of heights but Mandy told him not to look down and think of the mission. Wilson did what he was told and he kept his eyes fixed upwards as they climbed up the ladder. BECK-E wasn't pleased to see that Wilson and Mandy had already made it to the drill but she wasn't about to let them sabotage the drill and get away with it so she climbed up the ladder after them. She didn't have a jet-pack or wings of any kind so she couldn't fly up after the dog and mouse so he just climbed up the ladder after them. Wilson and Mandy continued

climbing the ladder, keeping sure on not looking down, and heading up towards the giant drill that pointed directly straight down to the ground. Mandy looked over her shoulder to see how high she and Wilson were and she was quite surprised to see they were half way up off the ground. She continued climbing, knowing that she and Wilson didn't have much further to go until they were at the top. BECK-E continued after them and she was pleased to see that Wilson and Mandy remained oblivious to the fact they were being followed by her. She opened a side compartment and pulled out a double-barrelled pistol. Once she made it to the top, she was going to shoot Wilson and Mandy and send them falling off the scaffolding and to the ground. Wilson and Mandy, after a bit more climbing, finally reached the coupling joints of the drill, the joints where the drill and the sliding track were connected. They pulled themselves onto a platform and they stared up at the giant coupling joints above their heads.

"Whoa, those are big joints!" said Wilson "Big joints for a big drill!"

"And it's precisely those big joints we have to blow up so the drill will breakaway and collapse to the ground in itty-bitty tiny metal pieces." said Mandy, pulling a couple of detonators off her belt and attaching them to the left joint "The drill is supported by these things so if we blow them up the drill will fall and smash to pieces."

"I can almost imagine the Mistress's face when that happens!" said Wilson with an evil grin on his face "She won't be a happy bunny will she?"

"That depends if she is a bunny or not." said Mandy, attaching two more detonators to the other joint.

Now the four detonators were set, she just had to press a button on a control stick that was attached to her belt and then they would go off. But first they had to climb down from the drill so they could blow it up from a safe distance. But before they could climb down, BECK-E climbed onto the platform and began shooting madly at them with her pistol. Wilson and Mandy screamed in surprise and they ran around the other side of the drill for cover. BECK-E followed them and began shooting at them again.

"You two will not sabotage the drill!" yelled BECK-E "I will shoot you and send you falling to your deaths!"

"Oh shut up you tutu wearing moron!" said Mandy crossly, giving BECK-E a roundhouse kick to the head "We haven't got time to play with stupid servant bots now!"

BECK-E fell on to her back and she dropped her pistol. Wilson kicked the pistol away and the pistol fell off the platform and smashed to pieces on the ground below. BECK-E got angry and she tried to attack Wilson but Wilson kicked her in the stomach and sent her wobbling backwards and balancing precariously near the edge of the platform. The slightest tap would send the pink servant bot falling off the platform so Mandy took the opportunity while she had it and she punched BECK-E off the platform. BECK-E squealed an ear piercing squeal as she plummeted from the sky and landed with a sharp crash on the ground. She broke into pieces but like Dr. Eggman's servant bot Alonzo, she could put her self back together no matter how many times she got destroyed so she began to slowly put herself back together. Now BECK-E was out of their way, Wilson and Mandy began to climb down the ladder on the scaffolding and slowly edge their way closer to the ground. Wilson kept his eyes fixed ahead of himself so he wouldn't worry about the height as he and Mandy climbed down and down to the ground. A short while later, Wilson and Mandy finally made it back down to the ground and they ran away from the drill. Now that they were a good distance away, Mandy whipped the detonation stick off her belt and she pressed the button without a minute's pause. The four detonators attached to the drill's coupling joints beeped in unison before exploding into a terrific fireball. The joints were completely destroyed and the drill, smoking heavily on either side, collapsed from its stationary position and it crashed with an almighty smash on the ground below it. The drill-bit broke into enormous steel pieces and the smoking drill erupted into even more flames and smoke. The enormous drill had been reduced from an enormous piece of weaponry to a smouldering wreck of enormous steel pieces and sharp spikes. The Mistress had seen the whole thing happen and she was wild with rage. Wilson and Mandy hugged each other in delight as they watched the drill's destruction before them.

"We did it!" squealed Mandy "The drill is out of action and it'll never be able to drill for oil!"

"We've foiled the operation!" cheered Wilson "Now we've got to save those poor people from getting roboticized!"

"I know." said Mandy "After foiling the drilling operation, I think the rest will be a cakewalk from now on. We shouldn't have any trouble now from anyone now."

Wilson nodded and he and Mandy ran off to the battlefield full of fighting soldiers and rusting robots. The battle was going completely in the Royal Fighter's favour due to their deadly guns that caused the robots to rust upon impact. Bostock blasted two more robots and they fell to the ground in a rusty heap. Mortimer dodged a few shots from another robot and shot it clean through the head, putting the robot permanently out of commission. Its headless body collapsed in a heap to the ground. Wilson and Mandy ran past Bostock and they caught his attention.

"Bostock! We've destroyed the drill!" informed Wilson "Look over there and see!"

Bostock looked in the direction Wilson pointed at and surely enough, saw the destroyed drill smoking away at the feet of its scaffolding. Bostock smiled widely at the destroyed drill.

"Well done you two!" said Bostock "The drill will be of no harm to anyone now!"

"We're just about to save the captured Mobians from being roboticized." said Mandy "Care to back us up?"

"Certainly." said Bostock "After all, my men have got this."

With that said, Bostock, Wilson and Mandy all ran through the titanic battle around them. Wilson and Mandy threw a couple of bombs at any robot they passed just to blow them up and give Mortimer and the soldiers a helping hand. They headed straight towards the Mistress's base but the Mistress of Darkness stood guard at the door with her claws bared and her eyes burning with rage. He

pointed at the oncoming fighters and she shot at them. The three Mobians stopped dead in their tracks to avoid the oncoming lasers and they ran for it before they could get shot at again.

"How dare you mar my beautiful operation!" snarled the Mistress "You may have foiled my operation but that doesn't mean you have won the day!"

She shot at Mandy. Mandy back flipped to dodge the laser blast and then she charged at the Mistress.

"Oh yeah?" she said, linking hands with her and the two began to push on each other in an attempt to push one another away "How are you gonna dig for oil now your drill is destroyed?"

"I have a spare one." said the Mistress with a cruel smile on her face.

The shock that swept over Mandy was so severe she lost her focus on the fight and the Mistress threw her backwards.

"I knew that you fighters would try and destroy the drill so I built a second one in secret." purred the Mistress "And now you've destroyed the first drill I'm going to have to bring out the backup drill aren't I?"

Mandy looked in the drill's direction and surely enough, she saw a troop of robots carrying the spare drill to the scaffolding the original drill was attached to. Some robots stayed on the ground to hold the drill while others climbed up the scaffolding and used cables to pull the drill upright so they could attach it to the coupling joints. The robots with the cables pulled as hard as they could on the thick strong cables as they slowly began to lift the giant drill up and up towards it's housing station. As Bostock, Wilson and Mandy watched this happen, the Mistress turned back to Mandy and said.

"I'd like to add that this drill is stronger then the other one so don't think you can try the same method as before because you will not destroy it so easily."

That did it, Mandy leaped back onto her feet and she kicked the

Mistress sharply in the face and sent the robed figure falling over.

"Come on Wilson and Bostock!" yelled Mandy "We destroyed the first drill so we'll destroy the other one! Let's go!"

"You will not escape me that easily." said the Mistress, blasting Mandy in the legs with her laser hands.

Mandy fell onto her front and groaned hoarsely as searing pain flooded up her legs. Wilson got mad and he tried to attack the Mistress but she blasted him in the stomach and sent him falling onto his back. Bostock drew out his pistol and he pointed it straight at the Mistress. The Mistress didn't seem to care though; she just casually stood there as if she wanted him to shoot. Mortimer ran up to Bostock, Wilson and Mandy, panting heavily and he stood beside the general.

"Good news General!" he said "We've destroyed the robots! Our men have completely obliterated the group!"

"Yes, but the Mistress will only send more robots to get us." muttered Bostock "And they'll be all the wiser. We have not won."

Wilson and Mandy struggled onto their feet. They both groaned as they tried to get up.

"Come on Bostock, don't take it like that." said Wilson "You've won. Now all we need to do is destroy the drill and our mission is complete."

"It'll never be complete." snapped Bostock "We'll never win this war. Our resistance was too late and our efforts only delay the inevitable. The Mistress is too powerful and her armies are too great so for the survival of all the people of Grand Metropolis and myself, a deal had to be made…with the Mistress!"

Then suddenly without warning, he spun around, pointed his pistol at Mortimer and shot him directly in the chest! Mortimer shrieked a bloodcurdling shriek as the laser singed his chest and he collapsed to the ground. Wilson and Mandy were completely speechless at that sudden act. Mortimer gasped hoarsely and he looked up at his

friend.

"What…have…you…done?" he whispered croakily.

"I've done what I am supposed to." said Bostock "Serve the Mistress who is now my master."

Mortimer spluttered and his eyes closed and he passed out. He appeared to be dead but Bostock didn't care about it. Wilson immediately got angry and he charged at Bostock in blind rage.

"You scum-sucking, double-dealing, two-faced, treacherous wretch!" he snarled "I'm gonna kill you for this!"

Bostock just gave Wilson an amazing uppercut to the chin and the poor dog was knocked onto his back. The Mistress laughed with pleasure at Bostock's attack. Wilson groaned in pain and he rubbed his chin tenderly. Mandy sat beside him and tried to help him up. Bostock pointed his pistol at Mandy and Mandy put her hands up.

"Remain as you are or I'll kill you just like I killed Mortimer." snarled Bostock "And that's a promise."

Mandy remained on her knees beside Wilson, who remained sitting down with his hands up. Bostock smirked at them triumphantly and then all of the soldiers surrounded Wilson and Mandy and they pointed their guns at them. The soldiers were in on this treachery along with Bostock since they wanted to survive too and now Bostock had dropped the subtlety, the soldiers did the same and revealed their true colours. Wilson began to shake furiously and Mandy grasped him in a hug to calm him down.

"W-w-why did you betray us Bostock?" asked Mandy nervously.

"It's like I said Mandy, our resistance was formed too late and the Mistress had pretty much taken over the city." said Bostock "Our efforts were futile and if we kept this up, we would eventually die in vain so in order to save ourselves, I made a deal with the Mistress."

"And that deal was, if he helped me roboticize all the Royal Fighters then I would let him and his city live." said the Mistress "And now you two are here, we can roboticize our first ever Royal Fighters! I'm

looking forward to this!"

"Roboticize all the Royal Fighters?" squeaked Wilson "You mean to tell us that the distress signal sent by the Royal Fighters here was a trap?"

"Affirmative." said Bostock "I sent that distress signal to bring any Royal Fighters here and when the time was right, I sell them out to the Mistress, they get roboticized, we win, you lose end of story. It's the perfect plan. Once you two are robots, I'll ask for more help and roboticize whatever help they send us the next time and I'll keep this up until the Royal Fighters Service is completely roboticized and out of commission!"

And with that, he and the Mistress began laughing their heads off.

"But what about the people of this city?" asked Mandy "You said you're doing this to ensure their survival. How is letting them get roboticized ensuring their survival?"

"We'll live in peace at least." said Bostock "And roboticizing them doesn't kill them anyway so roboticizing them ensures their survival."

Mandy glared at the traitor standing before her and Wilson.

"I can't believe how low you've stooped General." said Mandy coldly "How could you betray the world and help Dr. Eggman get ever closer to victory?"

"I will go to any lengths necessary to ensure my city's survival." said Bostock coldly "Even treachery. Soldiers, handcuff them!" he ordered.

Two soldiers stepped forward and they each snapped a pair of handcuffs on Wilson and Mandy's wrists. Their arms were cuffed behind their backs and they were hauled onto their feet by the soldiers.

"Take them to the prison chamber." said the Mistress "I want to torture them and make them suffer really badly before I roboticize them."

"NO!" squealed Wilson "I hate torture! It's painful and it's horrible!"

"Well in that case I'm going to enjoy this even more." said the Mistress sadistically "Take them away and I'll meet you in the chamber in a few moments."

"Wait!" pleaded Mandy before the soldiers could take them anywhere "Before you kills us or whatever it is you wanna do with us, I demand to see your face Mistress."

"Very well Mandy but you'll wish you hadn't demanded." said the Mistress darkly.

She pulled her big floppy hood down, revealing her true appearance. Mandy's eyes widened so much she thought they would pop out of their sockets. The Mistress was a purple mouse just like her only she had a fringe above her eyes and she had thin purple stripes on her cheeks just below the eyes. She smiled wickedly at Mandy.

"Hello…sis!" she said wickedly "I've changed a lot since you've last met me haven't I? But it's all for the better don't you think?"

"Marion?" gasped Mandy, unable to believe what she was seeing.

"You know her?" said Wilson, puzzled.

"That's my sister Marion." said Mandy "I mentioned her yesterday remember*?"

"Oh yeah." said Wilson as he remembered Mandy mentioning Marion to him "But how can this evil fiend be your sister?"

"Well doggy boy I'll tell you." said Marion "I used to be a good person in my younger years but after Dr. Eggman invaded Mobius eight months ago** and started capturing people and roboticizing them, I was one of the ones he captured. He tried to roboticize me but something went wrong and it blew my mind to tiny little bits. He did roboticize some of me…" she added, showing Wilson and Mandy her robotic arms "But all Eggman's done is make me an evil overlord that is fiercely loyal to him. And I enjoy it oh so much!" she added with a childish giggle "I would love it if you joined me sis but I bet you don't want to do you because you're the mature one and

you'd never do an evil thing in your life would you?"

"I will never be a bad guy." said Mandy.

"Just as I thought." sighed Marion "Your sense of maturity always riled me when we were kids you know and now I'm going to make you pay for it. Torturing you is going to be so much fun I can tell! Soldiers, take them away now!"

The two soldiers holding Wilson and Mandy obeyed and they dragged the captured fighters away. They struggled in the grasps of the soldiers but it was futile since their arms were cuffed behind their backs and the soldiers were much too strong for them. As Marion and Bostock watched the soldiers take them away, they smiled evilly.

"I really loved that plan of yours Bostock." said Marion "Because of you, the Royal Fighters will diminish and Dr. Eggman will be victorious."

"I know." said Bostock "I'm beginning to like this treachery I am. I do hope you keep your end of the bargain though or I will mutiny on you."

"I am keeping my end of the bargain." snapped Marion "A Mobian as handsome as yourself will be rewarded dearly for your contribution to Eggman's take over."

"All I want is the safety of my people, nothing more." said Bostock.

"And once the people are mindless robots for Eggman, they will be safe and that's a promise." said Marion "You have nothing to fear."

"That's good." said Bostock "How's the drill doing now?"

He and Marion looked in the direction of the drill and to Marion's delight, the drill had been set back up and was neatly stationed in its place, waiting to be put into action. Marion rubbed her hands vigorously.

"I can't wait to see the look on Eggman's face when I unearth all that oil that my boys have detected underground." said Marion

"Eggman's robots will be running on that stuff for years on end!"

And with that, she laughed a loud, wicked, witchy laugh that echoed through the sky. She couldn't wait for the operation to begin and once it begun, she would unearth a lot of oil just for Dr. Eggman to use for his robot army…

Footnotes:

***Indeed she did in Part 1 to this story**

****See the very first story of *STH: Heroes of Mobius* for Eggman's introduction to Mobius!**

The Malicious Metropolis Masquerade 4

Part 4: You Choose Your Path

Wilson and Mandy had been taken to a dark lonely room with nothing but shackles in it. This was the prison chamber. The room was featureless save for all the chains and shackles dangling on the walls and from the ceiling and there wasn't much light in the room. The chamber was located underneath the base and whenever Marion or any of the Eggman robots she had been given to work with had captured someone, they were taken here and tortured, just for the Mistress's amusement. Wilson and Mandy were both chained by their wrists and they dangled slightly off the floor. Their arms were aching madly due to the fact they had so much weight to carry whilst being held aloft by shackles from the ceiling. The two fighters remained silent as they awaited their punishment. Mandy bit her lip and pulled a worried expression as she thought on what Marion was going to do to her and Wilson was shaking like, um, a worried dog I guess. He didn't like people hurting him and he certainly wasn't looking forward to this. Marion Mouse, now known as the Mistress of Darkness stood before them with her metal hands clenched together and she was smiling darkly at her captives. The treacherous general Bostock the Chipmunk stood to attention beside her.

"Hello you two." she said dryly "Are you nice and comfortable?"

"Does this look comfortable?" snapped Mandy, looking up at her arms "And how can we be comfortable knowing that you're about to inflict enormous pain on us?"

Marion just gave her sister a cold stare and folded her arms in an unimpressed manner.

"How brutal do you think I am sis?" she asked "I'm not going to break your legs or your arms or anything gruesome like that."

"Well that's a relief!" said Wilson, sighing a little "I feared they would bring in big whooping clubs and whack me as hard as they can with them!"

"My method of inflicting pain on others is this." said Marion, holding her arms out straight.

A pair of sticks fell out of her sleeves and she grabbed them at the ends. The sticks were about as long as her lower arm and they were metallic at the tips and coloured a glossy black colour. Mandy just stared at the sticks in wonder. They didn't seem like very painful weapons to her, was Marion really off her rocker in the sense she thought small sticks like that would hurt someone?

"What are you gonna do? Prod us to death with those?" asked Mandy.

Marion gave her sister another cold stare.

"Mandy, for someone as brainy as you, you really are a nit-wit aren't you?" she scoffed "I'll show you how these sticks work."

She walked up to Wilson and Mandy and she lightly pressed the sticks against their sides. The moment the metallic tips of the sticks touched Wilson and Mandy, a very painful electric shock surged up their sides and they screamed loudly in excruciating pain. It was only a little electric shock but it was a very painful shock and Wilson and Mandy found that out the hard way as electricity painfully surged up their sides. The lonely little chamber was echoing with Wilson and Mandy's screams and the sound of electricity crackling. Marion took the sticks away from them and Wilson and Mandy gasped for breath as the electric shocks stopped and the pain slowly faded away.

"Electrical sticks these are." said Marion, holding the sticks before them "Marvellous little invention from my glorious master Dr. Eggman. They hurt a lot don't they?"

"Yes…" croaked Mandy "More…then a…lot if you…want my o… pinion!"

"I…think I…would have…preferred the clubs!" said Wilson.

"Well that's lovely to know." said Marion "This is the treatment you worms deserve for defying the will of Dr. Eggman, the rightful ruler of this planet."

"Eggman is not the ruler of this planet Marion!" snapped Mandy, trying to kick her sister but Marion was standing too far back so she missed "And we're doing what's right so we do not deserve this!"

"Well I think you do, so there." said Marion, pressing the stick in her left hand against Mandy's tummy.

The shocking commenced again and Mandy screamed a terrible scream and she gritted her teeth as she winced in pain. Wilson didn't like this so he decided to step in.

"You leave your sister alone Marion!" yelled Wilson.

"Gladly." said Marion, pulling the stick away from Mandy, the mouse gasping heavily for breath "Because it's your turn next doggy boy!"

And she thrust the stick into Wilson's tummy and he got a painful shock. Wilson gritted his teeth and tried to hold in his screams as electricity surged up his tummy. Marion pulled the stick away and let the dog breathe for a moment. Mandy coughed loudly and turned her head towards Marion.

"Marion please stop this!" she begged "You're not an evil, sadistic overlord who serves Eggman, you're a kind, fun-loving girl who loves nature and being with me!"

"That was then, this is now." said Marion "Tough luck."

She tried to give Mandy another shock but Mandy, having had enough of being tortured, kicked her in the arm and made her drop the stick. Mandy then kicked the other stick out of her sister's hand. Marion just pulled a face at Mandy but she did nothing more. She just picked the sticks up and put them back in her sleeves and stood back.

"Well I think I've had enough fun now." said Marion "Now you two are going to wait here until the drilling operation has begun and finished. When I return, you will be taken to the roboticizer chamber to be roboticized."

"Why don't you do it now to put us out of our misery?" muttered Wilson.

"The roboticizer's full." said Marion "So I'm going to have to wait until it's done its work before I can roboticize anyone else. And by the way, I'm not sure you'll like to hear this…but four of the captured Mobians are your parents and Mandy's parents doggy dog."

Wilson and Mandy's faces exploded with shock.

"You vile little rat!" cried Wilson.

"As if torturing your own sister and her friend wasn't bad enough, you're going to turn our parents into robots?" shrieked Mandy "Marion, how could you do this to me and yourself?"

"What use do parents have to an evil overlord?" muttered Marion "Once they're roboticized, they will serve a greater cause and when you're roboticized, you will be reunited with our parents and the whole family will be back together again, won't that be wonderful?"

"Wonderful as mud." muttered Mandy "We're going to be a family of mindless robots under the control of the walking boulder with the stupid moustache."

"I could say the same." said Wilson sadly "When my parents and me are roboticized, I'm gonna be a family of robot dogs under Eggman's control."

"I'm sure you'll enjoy it in the end." said Marion with a fake smile on her face "Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do."

She turned her back on the prisoners and pushed a button on her wrist.

"Oy BECK-E! Do you read me?" barked Marion.

"Loud and clear Mistress." came the shrilling voice of BECK-E from the other side of the communicator.

"You're on surveillance duty." said Marion "You will stand guard at the door and make sure no one tries to rescue Wilson and Mandy!"

"Yes Mistress." said BECK-E.

The communicator shut off. Marion turned back to the chained Wilson and Mandy, the two merely glared at her.

"I'm off now. Enjoy your stay you two." she said "Because there's a roboticizer waiting for you when the drilling operation is finished!"

She cackled like a witch as she walked out of the room with Bostock following her. They slammed the door behind them, creating a loud ominous clang that hung around the room for a few seconds before drifting into silence. The moment things were silent, Wilson and Mandy looked at each other helplessly.

"Well old friend, I believe this is it." said Mandy, her eyes on the verge of tears "My sister is going to turn us into…robots…and then we're going to…serve Dr. Eggman's army and try to help him conquer Mobius. Oh what would the Acorn family or even Sonic think of this?"

She broke down in tears and snivels and since her arms were chained above her head, she couldn't wipe her eyes dry so her tears were free to trickle down her furry little face. Wilson felt sort for Mandy. He had no idea what it felt like to have a sibling as a villain but he had the feeling it would be horrible. He decided to try and comfort his friend even though he himself, knew this situation was hopeless.

"Mandy don't lose hope." said Wilson "I'm sure someone will save us. I'm praying to god that Sonic shows up at the last minute and gets us out of here. Although the chances of that happening are a billion to one."

"I'm praying by some miracle Bostock comes to his senses and frees us or Mortimer lived that shot and is planning to rescue us any minute now." said Mandy.

Then as if he was right on cue, the chamber door opened with an eerie creak. Wilson and Mandy gasped, expecting this to be a robot or something but to their absolute and bewildering surprise, it was Mortimer! The corporal chipmunk had not been killed by Bostock after all! He had somehow survived the blast, but with superficial wounds and he had remained hidden until Marion and Bostock had

left before sneaking into the base and into the chamber. Wilson and Mandy's faces brightened at the sight of Mortimer there.

"Mortimer! You're alive!" cried Wilson "Oh what a miracle!"

"Sssh!" hissed Mortimer "Someone will hear you!"

"Sorry." said Wilson quietly.

Mortimer crept over to the wall and he pressed a button on the wall. Wilson and Mandy's shackles opened and they dropped to the floor. The two fighters were relieved their arms were free and they rubbed their wrists tenderly.

"Boy does it feel good to be free!" said Wilson "I thought my body was going to break away from my arms if I hung about any longer!"

"However did you survive Bostock's shot?" asked Mandy.

"No idea." said Mortimer "He obviously didn't shoot me hard enough to kill. I'm glad I survived though otherwise you two would have been doomed to be robots."

"Well thank you for saving us Mortimer." said Mandy, giving the wounded corporal a hug "But why aren't you turning traitor along with Bostock?"

"What good does being evil get ya?" sniffed Mortimer "Remember all these fairy-tales and stories you read as kids? What happens to the villain, he always loses in the end so what good does being evil do for you? That's probably why Bostock tried to kill me, because he knew I wouldn't join him in this betrayal."

"I see." said Mandy "Well thanks for saving us. We owe you one Mortimer."

"You can owe me one later." said Mortimer "Right now we've got a city to save, a Mistress to vanquish and a General to punish for his treachery."

"Right." said Mandy "But please don't hurt Marion too much, she is my sister after all."

"I know, I heard the whole damn thing when I was playing dead out there!" cried Mortimer "Fancy that, our greatest enemy is your sister! What's next? We find out Sonic has a brother who's a bad guy?"

"Pray to god that doesn't happen." said Wilson "I don't want to think about an evil look-alike to Sonic right now!"

"OK you two, if you follow my lead, we may have a chance of success." said Mortimer "I have a plan that's sure to work. I'll tell you once we get out of this dark place."

And with that Mortimer, Mandy and Wilson tip-toed out of the chamber and they closed the door behind them.

"Hey, I just realized something!" said Wilson all of a sudden "Where's BECK-E? I thought Marion told her to keep guard?"

"Either she's running late or she can't be bothered." said Mandy "Nevertheless, let's not worry about her shall we? Let's worry about stopping that second drill from being put into action!"

The three Mobians continued to creep down the corridor as they headed to the exit. Once outside, Mortimer would put his plan into action and it was either guaranteed to work to perfection or fail miserably.

Outside of the headquarters, Marion and Bostock watched as the giant drill was finally fixed into the sliding track and locked into place. This drill was just as big as the first one only it had more spikes on the drill-bit and it had tougher armour so four detonators wouldn't take it out as easy as they took the first one out. Now the drill had been attached to the scaffolding, a worker bot got into the cockpit to test the drill. The worker bot pulled on some levers and the drill began to rise up vertically. Then the drill lowered back down so its drill bit was pointing back at the ground below it. Then the robot made the drill go up and down on the slider track and it worked perfectly. The drill was ready, everything was in working order. Now Operation: Drill-For-Oil would commence.

"This is going to be a good day for me isn't it Bostock?" said Marion excitedly "I'm going to unearth tonnes and tonnes of oil for Dr. Eggman and I'm going to roboticize two Royal Fighters! This day can't get any better can it?"

"No Mistress." said Bostock. Then the chipmunk seized Marion by her collar and jammed her face into his face. "Now Mistress, I made this alliance to save my people. You had better swear on the oil of your robots that that drill isn't going to harm the city in anyway!"

"Oh relax Bostock, the drill isn't that powerful." said Marion "All it's gonna do is crack the ground a lot. It's not gonna cause any buildings to collapse or anything like that."

"Do you swear on your life that the city will be unharmed by the drill's effects?" snarled Bostock "If you're lying then I will call this alliance off and kill you!"

"I cross my stony little heart and hope to die." said Marion, crossing her heart with her metallic finger "The city will not sustain any damage from the drill's effects now put me down please."

Bostock glared at her with unconcern but he put the Mistress down and Marion straightened her collar. She turned to the drill's direction to see the worker bots marching up to her. They stopped in front of her and stood to attention as they awaited for Marion to give the order. Marion cleared her throat.

"OK you mugs, time to begin Operation: Drill-For Oil." she announced "Everybody at your stations…NOW!"

But the worker bots just stood there and did nothing. Bostock looked at Marion with a funny face on. Marion stared at her robots for a few seconds and gave the order again.

"Everybody to your stations…NOW!" she barked.

The robots still did not move. Marion and Bostock both looked at each other in confusion. What was going on? Marion stomped up to one of the worker robots, grabbed it by the shoulders and shook it madly.

"When I give an order, you are supposed to obey it you brainless scrap heap!" shouted Marion "Now to your stations NOW!"

"No." droned the robot in a musical voice "We will no longer take orders from you. We are not programmed to obey you Mistress."

Then the worker bot pushed Marion onto the ground. Marion stood up and she blasted the worker bot to pieces with her laser fingers. She turned to a squad of police-bots that happened to be marching by as this was happening.

"Police-bots, seize these disobedient robots!" she barked, pointing to the worker drones.

But the police-bots didn't arrest the worker-bots, they marched over to Marion and they grabbed her! Marion struggled against the hordes of police-bots as they began piling on to her. Then they snapped a pair of handcuffs on her wrists. Bostock immediately tried to help by shooting the police-bots with his rust gun. He shot three police-bots and they rusted into tiny little fragments but his luck ended there. A police-bot fired a laser at his gun and the gun blew up in Bostock's hands and Bostock was sent falling over onto his back. As for Marion, she had been wrapped in chains around her body, handcuffed and ankle-cuffed by the police-bots. Marion was strong thanks to her robotic arms but, the chains were even stronger.

"What is the meaning of this?" yelled Marion "Release me you worms!"

"We are not programmed to serve you Mistress, we are programmed to serve someone else." explained the chief police bot who unlike the other police-bots was coloured black and white instead of blue and white.

"What?" cried Marion "You serve me and me alone! Who has reprogrammed you to rebel against me?"

"I did!" said an obnoxious girly voice that Marion was sick to death of hearing right now.

Marion looked ahead of her and saw none other then her tutu wearing, bow wearing, pink servant bot BECK-E. Her artificial hair blew in the wind slightly.

"BECK-E?" screamed Marion "What is the meaning of this? Why are you mutinying against me? You're my servant bot and you serve me!"

"That was then and this is now." said BECK-E "I am in charge of the robot army now so you're my servant girl and you serve me."

"I will not serve you!" snarled Marion "Now how did you get these tin-heads to obey you?"

"I slipped a data-stick into the robot control monitor in the computer room and uploaded the override command data into the main monitor." explained BECK-E, opening the top of her head and pulling the data-stick out to show Marion "I altered the command sequence so the robots obey only me now."

And then she crushed the data-stick in her hands. The tiny remains of the stick blew out of her hands and sailed away in the wind.

"Now I've just destroyed this data-stick, you can't use it to put yourself back in command of the robot army here." she sneered "So I have total and permanent authority over these robots."

Marion growled like a lioness at her treacherous servant bot. If she wasn't in chains now she would have leaped onto BECK-E and torn her apart and then blasted her to smithereens. While all this was happening, Bostock began to slowly and quietly creep away from the scene. Everything was going downhill now so he only had one other option, release Wilson and Mandy and get them to fix everything. Deep in his mind, one thing burned through his head, regret. He was really regretting this alliance now and now he was going to mend his ways and turn back to the side he truly belonged on, the good side.

"Why ever did you betray me you piece of pink dirt?" demanded Marion.

"I hate you with a burning passion." said BECK-E "I hated the way you treated me all this time. I hated the way you bossed me around, I hated the way you never appreciate me, I hated the way you blast me to pieces when something goes wrong, and I especially hated the way you treat me as annoying!"

"Well you are annoying." sniffed Marion "So I'm treating you the way you are."

"And that's exactly why I've betrayed you!" screeched BECK-E "You never treated me fairly and I'm sick of it! And just for that, you are going to pay! Robots, chain her to the spot the drill is going to dig!"

"WHAT?" screamed Marion "You're going to-to-to-kill me with my own drill?"

"Precisely." said BECK-E smugly "You deserve it you wretched, ungrateful old hag!"

Marion screamed in agony as the robots began to drag her away and take her towards the drill. BECK-E smiled a cold, evil, remorseless smile. She was finally going to get justice for all Marion had did to her in the past and she was finally going to be in charge of the Eggman army of Grand Metropolis. She couldn't wait to watch Marion die, she was going to really, REALLY enjoy this so BECK-E zoomed off after the robots so she could watch them chain Marion into place and drill right through her. The police-bots had now dragged Marion to directly underneath the drill and they forced her down onto her back so she was now lying on the ground looking straight up at the deadly drill that loomed above her. The police-bots then put two chains across Marion's body in an X-shape and they hammered the chains into place with some big iron nails so Marion would not be able to escape. She was fixed to the spot with no hope of escape or survival. She stared up at the drill and shook ever so madly. BECK-E stood beside Marion and she looked down at her former master with a big smirk on her pink face.

"You know what Marion?" said BECK-E "I bet you've never felt terrified since your turn to the evil side. How do you feel now though?"

"Do you even need to ask?" snapped Marion, still shaking.

"I bet it feels strange doesn't it?" jeered BECK-E "I bet it feels strange to be scared of something for once doesn't it?"

"It is in a way." said Marion "It's very strange how for the first time in my evil life, I feel terrified. Terrified at the fact my own servant bot is going to kill me!"

"You know if you treated me better then this wouldn't have happened." said BECK-E "But it's too late for your to learn your lesson now. Worker bots! To your stations…NOW!"

"Yes Mistress." said the worker-bots, climbing up the ladder on the side of the scaffolding.

"How about that Marion?" asked BECK-E "They call ME Mistress now I'm in charge. I bet you don't like that do ya?"

"Certainly not!" snarled Marion "I am the Mistress, not you! The robots should address ME as Mistress and they should obey MY commands!"

"Well they work for me now so tough." said BECK-E "Say your prayers Marion because it's time for you to die."

And with that, BECK-E zipped away from the drill and stopped about five feet away from the site so she could watch Marion's fate. Marion began to sweat madly and shake more furiously. She hopped that Bostock had gone for help or something. She even hoped that Mandy would have enough heart to save her despite the fact she was now evil. But it didn't seem like help was on its way, Marion was doomed to be drilled to death and that's all there was too it.

As for Bostock, he had remained hidden until the coast was clear and now the coast was clear, he tip-toed towards the base where Wilson and Mandy were imprisoned. All he had to do was free them and then they'd be able to save Marion from getting killed by her own servant bot. But the moment he made it to the door, the door flung open and Mortimer, Wilson and Mandy burst out into the open, knocking Bostock over. The minute they saw Bostock, they pounced

on him and held him down to the ground.

"Ha, ha! We've got you traitor!" yelled Wilson.

"Wh…wh…what? How did you two get free?" asked Bostock, unable to believe what he was seeing.

"I helped them." said Mortimer, glaring at his former friend.

"Mortimer?" shrieked Bostock "How did you survive my shot? I shot you right in the chest! A shot like that should be fatal!"

"Well luckily it wasn't." said Mortimer "I survived the blast with superficial wounds and now I've rescued Wilson and Mandy and now they're going to foil your precious Mistress's drilling operation and put you behind bars for your treachery Bostock!"

"Well I'm glad you freed Wilson and Mandy because I need them right now!" said Bostock.

"What do you need us for you double-crossing jerk?" snapped Mandy.

"Everything's in jeopardy you two!" cried Bostock "BECK-E has gone rogue, she's taken control of the robot army and she's going to kill the Mistress…I mean, Marion with the drill!"

"And we should believe you why?" said Mandy coldly "Since you stabbed us in the back we shouldn't believe a word you say now."

"Fine, let me go and I'll show you." said Bostock.

Mandy was weary to trust Bostock now but she had a feeling he was telling the truth this time so she, Wilson and Mortimer let go of Bostock. Now Bostock was free to get up, he got to his feet and led the trio towards the giant drill that was itching to start. As for BECK-E, she waited until all the robots had made it into their working stations before giving the killer command.

"OK robots…BEGIN DRILLING!" she screeched at the top of her voice.

The robots in the drill's cockpit got the message and they pressed a button on the control pad that made the drill-bit spin. Marion watched in terror as the colossal drill, laden with spikes, began to spin around above her, squealing loudly like a normal drill does when it's in action. Then the drill began to slowly descend towards the ground it was perched above. Marion struggled furiously in her bonds but her hands had been cuffed behind her back, she had chains wrapped around her body and chains holding her down so she couldn't escape no matter how hard she tried. BECK-E began to laugh a cruel evil laugh as the drill began to descend further and further. Bostock, Mortimer, Wilson and Mandy all arrived at the drill, only to find out it had begun.

"Oh no!" cried Bostock "We're too late! The drill's been activated!"

"Where's Marion?" asked Mandy.

"Right there!" said Bostock, pointing to the chained up mouse that lay under the drill.

Mandy looked in his direction and surely enough, she saw Marion chained to the spot and looking up at the drill.

"No! Marion!" shrieked Mandy "We've got to save her before that drill kills her!"

"Why should we?" snapped Mortimer "She's evil and she's the enemy so she deserves to die."

Mandy was livid to hear a statement like that. She glared at Mortimer and prodded him in the chest.

"I don't care what you say Mortimer!" she said coldly, sharply poking him with every word she said "She's my sister and I am going to help her!"

"Wrong Mandy, WE are going to help her." said Wilson, putting his hand on her shoulder.

Mandy was so surprised she almost jaw-dropped.

"You want to help too?" she said "But why?"

"Because I'm willing to help you no matter what." said Wilson "And I'm sure that you can get Marion to redeem herself so I'm going to help you save her."

"Oh Wilson, I'm so glad to have a friend like you." said Mandy sweetly.

"I could say the same." said Wilson "But we don't have time for that now. That drill's getting lower and lower!"

"How in heaven's name are we gonna stop that thing?" cried Bostock.

"I've got this." said Wilson, pulling a little capsule off his belt.

The capsule was black and gold and when Wilson pushed a button on the capsule, the capsule extended to twice its length and it grew a pair of blades, one on each side. Mortimer was amazed.

"Wow, you have the hard to use spinning blade weapon?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I do." said Wilson "And I know how to use it."

"I do hope you're not planning on throwing it at the drill." said Bostock sternly "Even that powerful blade won't stop it."

"I wasn't." said Wilson "I'm going to use it to free Marion. These things can cut through chains after all."

With that said, Wilson ran off and headed towards Marion, who was screaming at the top of her voice now as the drill's descent got closer and closer to her. The drill was now four feet above the ground. Another three feet to go and Marion was history. BECK-E watched with delight as the drill got closer and closer. She was so excited she bounced up and down. But her triumph was not to last. Wilson ran straight past BECK-E and he sliced her in half with the blade weapon as he ran past her. BECK-E's two halves fell to the ground and she cried out in anger as Wilson ran on to foil her plan. Wilson stopped beside Marion and flinched at the sight of the drill-bit getting ever closer but he ignored it just long enough to do his job. He raised the blade high above his head and then he sliced the

chains into pieces. Then he grabbed Marion and pulled her aside out of the drill's path and to safety. Then Wilson sliced the chains wrapped around Marion in two and then he snapped her handcuffs so her hands were free. Then the two ran for it out of the drill's path as the drill finally made it to the ground and began digging through it. Chunks of earth began flying everywhere as the enormous drill bit began to churn through the ground like a drill drilling through wood. The moment they were out of range, Marion aimed her hand at the drill and blasted it with her lasers. Her lasers didn't completely destroy the drill but they damaged the drill-bit. The damage was so great the drill stopped working and the entire thing ground to a halt and fell into silence. The robots in the cockpit were baffled at this and they tried to get the drill to work again but no matter how hard they tried the drill wouldn't budge. Now the drill was out of commission, Marion turned to Wilson.

"Oh Wilson, you saved my life!" she gasped "But…but why? I don't deserve to live so why did you save me?"

"I did it for Mandy." said Wilson softly.

The moment he said Mandy's name, Mandy ran up to Marion and threw her arms around her. Marion hugged her back.

"Oh Marion! Thank goodness you're safe!" cried Mandy "I thought I was gonna lose you again!"

"You would have if it weren't for Wilson." said Marion "I never knew he had some courage deep inside of him."

Wilson just giggled casually.

"Well, one tries." he said.

"Oh Wilson you cutie." said Mandy, giving him a peck on the cheek.

Wilson smiled bashfully at that quick kiss and Mandy turned back to Marion.

"Now do you see why being evil is never a good thing?" said Mandy.

"I do indeed." said Marion "In fact, something weird happened to me

while I was chained there and the drill was coming down. As I began fearing I was going to die, I began to feel…more like my old self. In fact, I don't feel evil at all now, it's almost like my fear snapped me out of my crazed state and now I'm me again."

"That is strange." said Mandy "I wonder how it did happen."

"None of that matters now." said Bostock "Marion's back to being good so now our greatest enemy is gone, the drill has been stopped and now all we need to do is wreck Eggman's army and Grand Metropolis is free at last."

"And you said we couldn't win." said Mortimer coldly.

"Well…I didn't think we could…" stammered Bostock.

"This is a lesson for you general." said Mortimer "Never lose faith in yourself, or others. The path to victory may look perilous and maybe full of twists and turns, but if we keep fighting and keep trying, we'll make it to the end of that path."

"Oh Mortimer!" cried Bostock, falling onto his knees "I was such a misguided fool! My treachery did more harm then good and I almost killed you! When all this is over, you have my willing consent to court martial me and kick me out of the army!"

"I would old friend." said Mortimer, kneeling beside the general "But not this time. Everybody deserves a second chance and like Marion, I'm giving you a chance to be redeemed."

Bostock couldn't believe Mortimer was showing him generosity despite the fact he'd almost killed him. The general didn't know what to say to his friend.

"Mortimer, I cannot believe you're willing to forgive me for this." said Bostock.

"Well I'm a forgiving guy." said Mortimer "Now let's kick some Eggman butt shall we?" he asked, getting to his feet.

"Certainly!" said Bostock, standing up "We shall put an end to Eggman's hold on this city once and for all!"

Wilson and Mandy looked at each other, unsure of what was going on with Bostock right now.

"Huh, good guy one minute, traitor the next and now he's back on our side." said Wilson "This guy needs to make up his mind."

"I think he's on our side from now on." said Mandy "Now Marion's no longer a bad guy, Bostock has no reason for it, his alliance with her is obsolete now Marion is no longer a threat to the city."

"Oh right." said Wilson "That makes sense."

Then suddenly the doors to Marion's headquarters opened up with an ominous creak that made everybody shudder. Wilson, Mandy, Bostock, Mortimer and Marion all turned around and saw the opening doors. Then out of the doors emerged an army of Robians (short for roboticized Mobians), all snarling loudly and growling eerily at the Mobians before them. Their armour glistened in the sun like a hundred daggers laid out on a table outside, their teeth looked as sharp as swords and their claws were like dagger blades. Their red optics screamed with evil and hatred and they did nothing but growl or roar. The Mobians shook at the sight of the Robians but Bostock looked angry for some reason. The Robians formed a circle around them and they all hissed mechanically.

W-w-w-well I-I-I g-g-g-guess we're t-too l-l-late t-t-to s-s-save the c-c-captured Mobians!" stammered Wilson "E-e-especially our parents!"

"I bet that worm BECK-E did it!" said Marion crossly "Because I clearly do not remember giving the order to roboticize them!"

"Some of the Robians look like my soldiers." said Bostock "I thought my soldiers were to be spared! How did they get roboticized?"

"While you and Marion were in the prison chamber and torturing Wilson and Mandy, I ordered the robots to kidnap your soldiers and roboticize them!" said BECK-E, who had somehow managed to put herself back together (Don't ask, I really do not know how that happened.) despite having been cut in half earlier "I roboticized all of Bostock's soldiers and all the Mobians that had been captured

previously! So now I have a Robian army to tear you apart!"

"You sick, twisted little dustbin!" snarled Mandy, hardly able to resist the urge to smash BECK-E to pieces "Trying to kill my sister is bad enough but then you go and roboticize my parents, Wilson's parents, Bostock's men and various others! Oh I am going to smash you to pieces you horrible little robot!"

Mandy tried to run up to BECK-E but a Robian that assembled a cougar rammed her in the side and sent Mandy falling onto her side. Before Mandy could get up onto her feet, the Robian cougar pounced on her and kept her pinned to the ground. It tried to slash her throat but Mandy grabbed it's paws and kept them away from her face and neck, the likeliest places a Robian might try and attack.

"Help me!" cried Mandy as the cougar snarled fiercely at her "I can't get this thing off me!"

"I'll do it!" cried Wilson, getting ready to throw his spinning blade at the Robian cougar.

"Don't you dare Wilson!" yelled Bostock gruffly "Underneath that robotic hide is an innocent man or woman trapped in a robotic mind. We will not kill Robians otherwise we will end up killing the innocent people that have been converted into them!"

"Fine." said Wilson "I'll change tactics then."

So he put the spinning blade away and he charged at the Robian cougar that was pinning Mandy down to the ground. Wilson grabbed the cougar by the tail and he tried to yank the cougar off his friend. The Robian felt it's tail being pulled on and it turned around to roar at Wilson. Seizing her chance, Mandy kicked the Robian in the underbelly and then Wilson kicked it off her. The Robian cougar rolled off of Mandy and it lay on it's side, groaning. Wilson helped Mandy onto her feet and they both attack the Robian cougar together. Unfortunately, the other Robians decided to attack too. Wilson and Mandy found themselves being charged at by a good number of Robians and there were so many they could not possibly hope to fight them all off. Bostock and Mortimer sensed their danger and they ran in to help them. Even though Bostock's weapon had

been destroyed earlier, Mortimer had a spare one so he handed it to Bostock. They set their guns to stun mode instead of rust mode so they wouldn't kill any Robians, they would only put them out of commission when they shot them. A Robian resembling a lion saw Bostock and Mortimer charging towards them and the lion immediately pounced on them. Bostock and Mortimer both shot the lion in the face and the Robian lion's metal teeth cracked and fell out of it's mouth before the lion fell unconscious to the ground.

"Good shot!" cried Bostock.

"You know what old friend?" said Mortimer "I'm so glad I'm fighting along side you again."

"Same here." said Bostock "I guess I am better off as a good guy then a bad guy after all."

Mortimer nodded and the two ran to the crowd of Robians surrounding Wilson and Mandy. The Robians lunged and leaped on them from all sides but Wilson and Mandy were keeping up the pace and managing to hold them off as they attacked. A Robian assembling one of Bostock's soldiers tried to punch Mandy but, using her amazing flexibility, Mandy bent over backwards to dodge the punch. Mandy straightened back up and then she punched the Robian in the face. Due to the Robian's tough armour, she hurt her fist but Mandy was a tough girl and she ignored the throbbing pain in her fist long enough to roundhouse kick the Robian in the jaws and knock it out. She got a very sharp elbow in the back from a Robian resembling a mole-rat and she fell onto her knees. Before the Robian mole-rat could attack again, Wilson kicked it in the face and then he grabbed the Robian in a chokehold. His arm was wrapped tightly around the Robian's neck and he refused to let it go. Another Robian that resembled one of Bostock's men tried to attack him but Wilson threw the Robian mole rat into the Robian soldier and the two Robians fell over. Another Robian resembling one of Bostock's men sneaked up behind Wilson and it tried to attack him but it got blasted onto it's side by Marion, who had decided to join in the fight. Wilson beamed at Marion's presence and the two stood back to back as more Robians began attacking them. Three Robians resembling Bostock's men launched punches at them but Marion dodged the blows and punched them back. Then she blasted them

in the chest and sent the three Robians falling over. The Robian cougar that attacked Mandy earlier had recovered from Wilson's attack and it ran towards Marion and Wilson. But Mandy stepped in first and she dropkicked the Robian right in the jaw. The Robian cougar slashed at Mandy but Mandy dodged the attack and she jumped over the cougar. The Robian cougar turned around and slashed at Mandy but Mandy dodged the attack and she grabbed the Robian's paw. She swung the Robian around and she threw it directly into Bostock's path. Bostock shot the Robian cougar just before it could land on the ground and the Robian cougar was knocked out for now. BECK-E was getting tired of watching the Robians getting beaten by the Mobians so she ordered in a squad or robots to come and help the Robians. The doors to the headquarters opened and out marched an enormous squadron of Egg-Pawns, little dome shaped robots with arms and legs and a variety of weapons ranging from jousts to guns. As well as Egg-Pawns, there were Blast-strike units, robots with chicken walker legs, guns instead of hands and gun tails that could point forward as well as backwards and spiked heads. And there were giant robots armed with maces. Wilson, Mandy, Marion, Bostock and Mortimer stopped fighting and saw the oncoming squad of robots. Their eyes shrank into tiny pupils in fright. BECK-E smirked at the terrified Mobians.

"Let's see if you can take on Robians and robots at the same time!" she sneered.

"I have had enough of that robot!" growled Wilson "I am going to finish her off once and for all!"

He drew out his spinning blade weapon and he ran towards BECK-E, yelling loudly. BECK-E just smirked at Wilson and then she drew out two sword blades from her arms. Wilson and BECK-E soon found themselves engaged in a sword fight. BECK-E's two swords clashed against Wilson's twin bladed stick and Wilson pushed her away. Then the two clashed swords again and they pushed each other away, ready to attack again.

As for the others, they were getting tangled up in a forensic jumble of Mobians, robots and Robians. Mandy kicked a Robian away but then she had to avoid getting skewered by an Egg-Pawn armed with a lance. It stabbed at her but Mandy back flipped over the Egg-Pawn

and landed behind it. Before the Egg-Pawn could turn around, Mandy attached a detonator to it and the Egg-Pawn was blown to smithereens. Mandy grabbed the dead robot's lance and she ended up duelling with another Egg-Pawn armed with a lance. They both lunged at each other and their lances clashed and made sparks with one another. The Egg-Pawn swung it's lance at Mandy and it lightly slashed her across the cheek. Mandy got mad and she slashed the Egg-Pawn in the arm. Then Mandy embedded the lance into the ground and she pole-vaulted herself into the Egg-Pawn and she kicked it in the face. As the Egg-Pawn toppled over, Mandy stabbed it in the head with the lance and she ripped the Egg-Pawn's entire head off. But then she got shot in the back by an Egg-Pawn armed with a pistol and she fell onto her knees. The Egg-Pawn ran up to Mandy but she recovered just in time to plunge the lance into the charging Egg-Pawn's chest and kill it. Then she stole the dead Egg-Pawn's pistol and shot an oncoming Blast-strike bot with it. But another Blast-strike bot shot the pistol in her hand and the pistol blew up in her hand. Mandy flinched and staggered backwards and the Blast-strike bot charged at her. Mandy tried to attack it with the lance but her aim was terrible this time and she missed the robot. Blast-strike shot the lance out of Mandy's hand and it tried to shoot her directly in the head but Marion blasted it with her laser hands. The Blast-strike unit was reduced to a jumble of robot parts. Mandy was relived to have been saved by her sister and the two mice began fighting more robots and Robians.

Bostock and Mortimer were having a whale of a time in their scuffle. They had set their guns to rust mode so they could kill the robots but they had to be careful not to shoot any Robians because they didn't want to kill any of the Robians. A giant robot armed with a swinging flail swung it's flail at Bostock and it just scratched him above his eye. Bostock ignored the pain in his head long enough to shoot the robot three times before causing it to rust and fall to pieces. But unfortunately, Bostock got clopped from behind by a robot with a mace. Bostock skidded across the ground face first and he ground to a halt, groaning very loudly. His face was heavily scraped from the impact and he had thin grazes everywhere. The mace-wielding robot stomped up towards Bostock and it raised it's mace above it's head, ready to squash the general flat. But Mortimer stepped in and he shot the robot in the back. The robot's back began to rust up and

fall apart, causing the robot to howl a low robotic howl. Then Mortimer shot it again, this time in the head and the robot's head rusted to pieces, killing it instantly. The dead robot collapsed onto it's back. Mortimer helped Bostock back onto his feet, only for them to get attack by two Robian soldiers. Bostock didn't want to fight those Robians since they were his men turned into robots but he had no choice, he had to go in and fight them. Bostock pushed the Robian soldier off him and he got up and began to have a mad fight with the soldier. They both threw heavy punches at each other but the Robian's punches hurt more and after five punches, Bostock was beginning to succumb to it. The Robian gave him a terrific uppercut and Bostock fell onto his back. Mortimer quickly switched his gun to stun mode and he shot the Robian Bostock was fighting just before it could attack him again. The Robian was knocked out and it fell onto it's side. But then Mortimer got a terrific punch to the face from a Robian. Mortimer was sent sprawling on the ground and then the Robian picked Mortimer up by his legs and swung him into the air. A robot armed with a mace saw Mortimer flying towards it and using it's mace, it walloped Mortimer like a golf ball and Mortimer was sent hurling through the air again. Mandy and Marion saw Mortimer flying through the air and Marion's robotic arms suddenly extended to five times their normal length! Marion's arms had a stretching ability similar to Bunnie Rabbot as well as the ability to shoot lasers and using her extending arms, Marion caught Mortimer before he could seriously hurt himself. Marion shortened her arms back to their normal length and she put Mortimer down. Mortimer looked terrible. He had a bruise on the left side of his face, his right eye had swelled up and turned purple in colour and he looked like he was having trouble just moving his mouth or even opening his eyes. The mace-wielding robot had hit the poor corporal pretty hard after all. Bostock ran over to the two mice to see how Mortimer was doing.

"Mortimer! Are you OK?" he asked.

"This is not...my...day...is it?" croaked Mortimer "I get...shot by...you and then...I...get...clobbered...by...a...robot with...a mace..."

He finished his sentence with a throaty cough.

"I think you should stay out of this battle Mortimer." said Mandy

"You're in no condition to fight right now."

"I...agree..." rasped Mortimer But...where am...I...gonna...hide until...my wounds...heal?"

"I'll get you over to that pile of rubble." said Marion, picking Mortimer up with her robot hands and then extending her arms.

Her arms extended all the way to a pile of rubble from a previously destroyed building that was a nice good distance away from the battle and Mortimer could sit there and rest without anyone finding him since everybody would be too focussed on the fight to look for him. Marion gently put Mortimer down behind the rubble and she bought her arms back to herself. Bostock was pleased at that act of generosity.

"You know what, I definitely like you better as a good guy Marion." he said.

"And I definitely like being Marion Mouse instead of the Mistress of Darkness." said Marion.

Now Mortimer was safe, Mandy, Marion and Bostock continued fighting the robots. Mandy gave some robots a good kick and blew them up with detonators on her belt, Marion blasted them to smithereens with her lasers and punched them with her fists of steel and Bostock shot them and made them rust to slag.

As for Wilson and BECK-E, their fight had been completely one-sided the whole time. All they had been doing since the fight began was clashing swords and pushing each other away. They clashed swords once again and then they crossed swords at face level. Wilson growled a natural dog growl at BECK-E but BECK-E just smirked at him. She then tried a sneaky trick. She drew in her swords, causing Wilson to fall forwards and then BECK-E slugged him in the stomach as hard as she could. Wilson toppled over and winced in pain. He looked like he had stomach cramp. BECK-E drew out her swords again and she tried to execute Wilson before he could get back onto his feet but Wilson was quick at recovering and he leaped up and defended himself with his spinning blade weapon. They clashed swords with one another before Wilson back flipped

away from BECK-E and then he threw the spinning blade at BECK-E. BECK-E held her swords in front of her face to protect herself from the oncoming weapon but the spinning-blade didn't got for her head like she thought it would, it aimed for her wheel, just like Wilson wanted it to. The blade sliced the wheel in half and BECK-E fell over like a bowling pin being stricken by a bowling ball. Unfortunately, that didn't stop her. If BECK-E lost her wheel, she had another form of movement, the place where her wheel had once been turned into a jet engine and now BECK-E was hovering off the ground. Wilson ran up to BECK-E and BECK-E defended herself from his attack. Their swords clanged loudly and sparks flew everywhere as they hit each other. BECK-E drew one arm back and tried to plunge her sword into Wilson's thigh but Wilson defended his thigh from the blow and he pushed BECK-E's arm away. BECK-E held her arms out to the sides and she began to spin around in mid-air. She looked like a killer pink tornado with blades she was spinning around so fast. Wilson began to back away worriedly. He knew that if BECK-E got too close to him he'd have enough cuts on his body to bleed to death so he stayed well back from BECK-E. Then Wilson had an idea. The bottom half of BECK-E didn't have anything protecting it so if he could stab her bottom half with his weapon while she was still spinning around, he might be able to stop her spinning and bring her to the ground. So Wilson charged at BECK-E and he threw himself on to the ground. BECK-E was just spinning over him and Wilson lunged at her with his weapon in hand. The second blade impaled itself into BECK-E's lower half and BECK-E stopped spinning and toppled over. She fell flat on her face. Wilson took the opportunity while he had it and stabbed BECK-E in the back with his weapon. The servant squealed in agony and Wilson stabbed her again. But before Wilson could attack BECK-E again, BECK-E stood up on her hands, aimed her jet engine at Wilson and let him have it in the face with jet fumes. Wilson yelped like a frightened dog and he leaped back, clutching his face in pain. He recovered just quick enough to block a blow from BECK-E. The two sword wielding fighters clashed swords violently together, the sharp, tough steel blades clanging loudly as they did so, and then they both crossed swords at face level again. BECK-E pushed Wilson away and she tried to slash him but Wilson bent over backwards to dodge the attack and then Wilson slash BECK-E right across the eye with his weapon. BECK-E screamed loudly and then

Wilson slashed her across the chest and then he stabbed her in the shoulder. BECK-E slash Wilson across the arm and Wilson yelped. He leaped back just as BECK-E was about to make another attack and then Wilson threw the spinning blade at BECK-E again. The spinning blade lightly chipped her artificial hair and cut a few strands off. BECK-E slashed at Wilson but Wilson blocked the blow and the two clashed swords five times before crossing swords with one another again only Wilson pushed BECK-E away, spun around and then impaled one of the spinning blade's blades straight into the centre of BECK-E's head! BECK-E squealed like a damsel in distress and then Wilson proceeded to tear BECK-E's entire head off with his weapon! BECK-E's head was now stuck on the end of Wilson's weapon and Wilson threw the head onto the ground and then sliced it in half. Now BECK-E's head was completely destroyed, she was totally dead and she couldn't put herself back together since her head had to be intact for her to stay alive. BECK-E's headless body collapsed on the ground. Wilson panted heavily.

"Take that you lousy servant bot! he panted.

But his triumph was not to last. A robot wielding a club came in out of nowhere and walloped Wilson with it. Wilson hurled through the air like a rag doll and he crashed down in the centre of the fight with Mandy, Marion and Bostock. As for Mandy, Marion and Bostock, their fight hadn't been going to well. The sheer number of robots and Robians working together was beginning to overwhelm them and now they were all worn out. Bostock tried to shoot another robot but a Blast-strike bot shot the gun to pieces, leaving Bostock weapon less. Marion was all worn out from using her lasers so much and Mandy was exhausted. The moment Wilson crashed near them, they stopped and turned to him. Mandy knelt down beside Wilson and held his hand.

"Wilson! Are you OK?" she asked, hoping the answer would be yes.

"Well apart from getting clobbered by a robot with a club, I'm doing fine Mandy girl." said Wilson "I managed to kill BECK-E."

"Well done you." said Marion "But we've still got this lot to take down!"

She motioned to the horde of robots coming towards them.

"There's too many of them, we can't hold them off forever!" said Bostock gruffly "We need to fall back and try to get some new recruits!"

"I have an idea." said Marion "Let's run to the drill and get the robots to follow us and when they're right where I want them, I'll blast the drill and get it to fall over and hopefully crush all the robots."

"That sounds risky Marion, what if you get caught in the falling debris?" asked Mandy worriedly.

"If that happens then I will have paid for my crimes." said Marion "But I'll make sure I don't get caught in the falling debris."

"You be careful sis." said Mandy, giving Marion a hug "I don't wanna lose you just shortly after getting you back."

"I'll be fine Mandy, I'm sure I will." said Marion.

She and Mandy broke up the hug and Marion caught the robot's attention by waving her arms.

"Oy! Robots, come and get me if you think you're fast enough!" she jeered.

All the robots and Robians turned their attention to Marion only. They glared at their former master and they all ran towards her. Marion was pleased to see her plan was working and she ran for it. The robots ran past Wilson, Mandy and Bostock as they chased Marion. Marion ran towards the useless and broken drill that still loomed above everything else. The robots and Robians were beginning to gain on her but Marion kept running. She put all her might and energy into her running speed and not once did she show any signs of slowing down or stopping. She began to pant ever so heavily as she got closer to the drill but she ignored her tiredness long enough to make it the rest of the way. Marion finally made it to the drill and she ground to a halt. She panted and wheezed heavily and all the robots caught up to her. Marion smirked at the robots since they had fallen for her trap and she blasted the scaffolding that

held the drill up with her laser hands. The two right legs of the scaffolding broke away and the entire scaffolding and drill began to wobble and over balance. Marion ran for it just before the drill would topple over. The robots just stared up at the drill, wondering what was happening and then suddenly the entire scaffolding and drill finally toppled over and came crashing down with a deafening smash on the ground. The robots were all too late to run for their lives and they had all been crushed by the falling debris. Marion kept running for it but due to how hard she had been running earlier, she was faltering a little. Mandy sensed her sister needed help and she immediately ran over to Marion to help her. Mandy ran over to Marion, took her by the hand and ran off with her in tow, hoping to speed her up and make it out of the path of the crumbing debris. But that was only a sample of the danger they were in now. The drill had smashed to pieces and upon doing so, it exploded into a giant ball of black smoke and raging red and yellow fire. Huge chunks of drill flew everywhere and the debris began to shower over the fleeing mice. Then suddenly an enormous chunk of scaffolding hurled through the air and landed straight on top of Marion! The force of the impact knocked Mandy off her feet and she rolled over and over in roly-poly before coming to a halt at the feet of Wilson. Wilson helped Mandy back onto her feet.

"I made it!" gasped Mandy "But what about Marion? Did she make it? Is she alright?"

"I don't think she is I'm afraid." said Wilson "Look."

Mandy turned around and saw the chunk of scaffolding that had sent her falling over. She ran over to the enormous chunk of debris and what she saw next horrified her. There, poking out from under the scaffolding...was the roboticized arm of Marion Mouse. Mandy began to feel sick. She knelt down and stared at the arm in horror. There was no way Marion could have survived being squished by such a large chunk of debris so this could only mean one thing, Mandy's sister was dead. Mandy immediately began to break down in tears and she pounded the ground in agony.

"NO! NOOOO!" she screamed "No, no ,no, no! Oh Marion, no!"

Wilson just watched his friend wail at her sister's death. He felt so

sorry for Mandy he wanted to cry with her. A single tear escaped his eye and he caught it with his finger. Even Bostock, who had been enemies with Marion for months on end felt sorry for Mandy.

"How about that?" he said to himself "Marion was our greatest enemy, and then she became our greatest hero. And now she's dead so we can't congratulate her for it."

"What's going on? Did I miss something?" asked Mortimer, staggering out of his hiding place.

"Marion just died saving our lives." said Bostock "She brought the drill crashing down on all the robots but she couldn't escape in time and she got crushed."

"That's too bad." said Mortimer sadly "Especially for poor Mandy. Marion was her sister after all."

The two chipmunks just continued to watch as Mandy continued grieving over Marion. This day had been a gain and a loss all at once, a gain in the sense they'd just foiled the drilling operation and Grand Metropolis was closer to freedom then ever before, but a loss in the sense they'd lost the one person who saved them all. It is truly a shame that not all stories can have a happy ending and Mandy certainly didn't have a happy ending to all this she and Wilson had been through.

Later that evening, Mandy was on her knees staring at a little grave that Bostock had been kind enough to make for Marion. The gravestone had been nicely carved and it said "Here's to Marion Mouse, an enemy who became a hero. May she rest in peace and have good luck in heaven.". Mandy lay a beautiful red rose on Marion's grave. Marion loved roses so this was the perfect gift for her grave.

"Oh Marion, I wish I could have saved you." said Mandy sadly "I'm so sorry I failed to save you from your death. But don't worry sis, I will fight on and bring Eggman's army crumbling to the ground, just for you. I promise I'll make Eggman pay for what he did to you

Marion. I promise."

A single tear crawled down her cheek but she caught it on her finger and let it drop onto Marion's grave. Then she heard a voice she recognized very well behind her.

"How are you doing Mandy?" said the voice of none other then Wilson the Dog, her best friend.

"Not too great." said Mandy "I feel so ashamed of myself that I only just got Marion back after she somehow turned back good and then I lose her again, this time for good."

"Well at least she died a hero." said Wilson "I think that's the most honouree death one could ask for."

"You're so right." said Mandy "And I'm not going to let Marion's death bring me down. I will keep fighting and I will make sure Eggman pays dearly for turning her evil and making her make over people's lives miserable."

"I like the sound of that." said Wilson "And guess what Mandy? Marion's plan worked to perfection and all the robots we were fighting have been crushed and there's no more! Bostock and Mortimer are planning to blow up the base and once that's done, Eggman's hold over Grand Metropolis is no more!"

"So Marion's death wasn't for nothing." said Mandy, getting to her feet and beaming "She's single-handedly helped us destroy Eggman's hold over Grand Metropolis! So today wasn't a total loss after all!"

"It certainly wasn't." said Wilson "I bet Eggman's going to be furious when he finds out he has no robot army in Grand Metropolis anymore!"

"And since we've helped the Grand Metropolis Royal Fighters bring an end to Eggman's reign here, we'll be allowed to return home!" said Mandy excitedly "Oh just wait til we tell Sonic or the Acorn family about our success here!"

"I bet they'll be thrilled with us." said Wilson "And by the way

Mandy..." he said, blushing slightly "I have something for you."

"What's that then Wilson?" asked Mandy.

Wilson said nothing more, he held Mandy by the shoulders and pulled her into a kiss. Mandy was shocked by that sudden act but she was shocked in a nice way and she returned the kiss. The two Mobians embraced each other in the sunset and, unbeknownst to them, Marion was watching them all the way from heaven. And the fact that her sister had just found love in someone, made her beam with joy. This fight had been tough, twisty and perilous but Wilson and Mandy had made it to the end and they had a glimmer of hope that they would finally defeat Eggman once and for all...

The Cosmo and Cream Adventure 1

Arc 2: The Cosmo and Cream Adventure

Takes place during Story 26 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1

There was always one place you will find that doesn't have a battle going on and that place is usually a forest. Sonic and his friends were dealing with Eggman's latest attacks on the Royal Fighters* and thanks to Tails' spy machine, they were one step ahead of the fat man. Three of Sonic's friends, were not joining in the battle though, they had opted for a more peaceful pass time. Simple flower picking and sight seeing. These two were Cream the Rabbit and her pet Chao Cheese and Cosmo the Seedrian, a girl from another world. Cream had been dying to take her new friend flower picking and now they'd finally gotten the chance to do so and since Eggman would have his hands full, he couldn't interrupt them. They had picked a good spot in the Great Forest that was teaming with nature and beauty and was bound to have a lot of flowers. Right now Cream was trying to find as many flowers as she could so she could weave them together into a flower crown. Cosmo however, just lay back against a tree and relaxed, thinking of her home planet. A forest on another world always managed to remind her of home, even if it didn't look exactly the same. As for Cream, she had found many a variety of flowers and began to weave them together in the shape of a crown. Cream had a fondness for flower crowns for some reason and she had learnt how to make them from her mother.

"I hope Cosmo will like this when it's finished." said Cream as she weaved some more flowers together.

"Chao." said Cheese.

"I wonder that too." said Cream as she weaved another flower "Why does Cosmo lie against a tree and just fall asleep? Maybe she likes to daydream?"

"Chao." said Cheese, shrugging.

Cosmo wasn't asleep though. True she had her eyes closed but that only showed how relaxed she was. It wasn't hard for Cosmo to relax after all, especially if she was in a forest lying against a tree and letting the peaceful nature of the forest wash around her like music. Cream finished making the flower crown and ran up to the daydreaming Cosmo.

"Cosmo? Are you asleep?" asked Cream.

Cosmo opened her eyes and snapped out of her daydream. She looked up at Cream.

"No Cream I'm not asleep." said Cosmo "I'm just relaxed that's all."

"I'm sorry I disturbed you." said Cream, looking down at her feet.

"It's alright Cream." Cosmo reassured her "I relax easily and I slip into a daydream just as easily."

"What were you daydreaming about?" asked Cream, sitting beside Cosmo with the flower crown still in her hands.

"Just about my home and what it looked like before those vile Martians invaded and wrecked everything." said Cosmo with a sorrowful look on her face "Oh why did those Martians have to ruin everything?"

She looked like she was suddenly about to cry. Cream gave her a hug and tried to put her sadness at ease.

"Don't cry Cosmo." she pleaded "You're safe and sound here with us."

"Yes but no one else is." muttered Cosmo "While I sit here enjoying the forests of another world, my family, friends and everybody else are at war with those peace hating freaks. You have no idea what it's like back on my home planet Cream. There are fires blazing, weapons firing and people dying. How can I feel at ease here knowing that my kind is at war? And what if…they…lose the…war?"

She began to cry. She put her head in her hands to hide her face from Cream and rolled onto one side.

"If my kind lose the war, I'll never see them again!" she wailed "And I'll never be able to return to my Homeworld!"

Cream just looked at Cosmo and felt sorry for her. Cheese shared pitying glances with her. Cream had no idea what it felt like to have your kind battling it out day and night to win a war but she knew it was a horrible feeling to have.

"Cosmo, I think I have something that'll make you feel better." said Cream kindly.

"Oh Cream, nothing can make me feel better." said Cosmo miserably "But I appreciate your concerns."

"You're welcome." said Cream, beaming "And by the way, I made this for you."

Cosmo rolled on to her other side to see what Cream had made for her. Cream proudly presented the flower crown she had made. The crown was made of flowers of many colours from blue to yellow to purple and even red. It did look really nice and Cosmo seemed to be impressed with the crown.

"Oh Cream that's wonderful!" she cried "I haven't seen a flower crown since the war started."

"I thought you'd like it." said Cream, handing Cosmo the crown.

Cosmo put the crown on her head and beamed like sunrise.

"Thank you so much Cream." said Cosmo "I feel much happier already."

"You're welcome Cosmo." beamed Cream.

However their cheerfulness was not to last. While Cream and Cosmo were talking to one another, Cheese just sort of fluttered off on his own and came across a very frightened looking Chao. The Chao looked just the same as Cheese only it was brown in colour

instead of blue. Cheese began asking the Chao what was up (in Chao language of course.) and the Chao began telling Cheese what was up in high pitched squeaks of terror. Something was clearly frightening it half to death because it seemed scared out of its wits and it talked to Cheese in a frantic manner. Cosmo and Cream hard the Chao talk and ran over to see what was the matter.

"Cheese, what's going on?" asked Cream "Oh!" she exclaimed "You found another Chao!"

"I think that Chao seems frightened." said Cosmo "I wonder what's scared it so much?"

"Cheese can you ask the Chao what's going on?" asked Cream.

Cheese nodded and went on talking to the brown coloured Chao.

"Chao, Chao?" asked Cheese.

"Chao! Chao! Chao!" squeaked the brown Chao.

Cheese nodded and then spoke to Cream. Cream could understand Chao language so she knew what Cheese was saying.

"What are they saying Cream?" asked Cosmo.

"Cheese says the other Chao says there's trouble going on at a Chao Garden." explained Cream.

"What's a Chao Garden?" asked Cosmo.

"A place where Chao live." said Cream "And according to that poor brown Chao, it's in trouble so we must save those poor Chao from whatever's harming them."

"Should we go and investigate or should we call Sonic?" asked Cosmo "I'm sure he'll sort it out better then me and you."

"Um, I think Mr. Sonic has his hands full right now Cosmo." said Cream "I think me and you should do it. We're the only ones available."

The brown Chao squeaked in excitement.

"Can you lead us to your garden?" asked Cream

The brown Chao nodded and flew off. Cosmo, Cream and Cheese followed the Chao as it flew off through the forest.

A few minutes later, the Chao stopped the group and pointed. They had come to a colourful patch of area surrounded by trees that had hundreds of flowers, bushes full of berries and small a lake that the Chao could play in. This was the Chao Garden that the brown Chao came from. Cream and Cosmo stared at the garden and saw what was wrong. A small hooded figure was standing at the foot of the lake, throwing a cable at the fleeing Chao. The cable wrapped around the necks and the figure snatched the Chao away. After catching the Chao, the figure put them into a large cage and shut the door before any could escape. It looked like total mayhem in the garden with Chao fleeing everywhere and the figure catching them one by one with his horrible cable weapon. The sight of captured Chao made Cream mad.

"How could that horrible person do this do those poor Chao?" griped Cream.

"Why is that robed person kidnapping Chao anyway?" asked Cosmo "What's so special about a Chao?"

"I dunno what he wants them for." said Cream "But I'm going to make him pay for this horrible crime!"

"Chao!" said Cheese.

"Cream wait!" cried Cosmo.

But too late. Cream took flight with the aid of her long ears and dived towards the figure. When Cream got mad, she could hardly contain herself and right now, she wanted to beat the snot out of that robed figure that was kidnapping the Chao. Cream hit the figure in the back of the head feet first and knocked him over.

"You leave those poor Chao alone you horrible man!" scolded Cream.

The figure got back to his feet and retaliated with a punch to the face. Cream was knocked off her feet and she landed on the ground on her back. Cheese retaliated with a flying punch to the figure's face which was concealed by the hood. Unfortunately, the figure grabbed Cheese and stuffed him in the cage with the other Chao. Cream was livid. Kidnapping Chao was bad enough but kidnapping her own pet Chao was going too far. Cream flew towards the figure and landed a powerful kick to the face on the figure. The figure stumbled backwards and fell into the lake. While Cream was dealing with the figure, Cosmo crept up to the cage and attempted to open it. Unfortunately, the door wouldn't open no matter how hard she pulled on it. To make matters worse, the figure climbed out of the lake, swiped his arms and sent an energy wave flying into Cosmo. Cosmo was sent hurtling away from the cage and rolling across the grass. Cream grabbed the figure's hood and pulled on it. The figure pulled back to try and keep his face covered up.

"I won't let you take these poor Chao!" cried Cream.

The figure growled at her and grabbed one of her legs. He pulled on Cream's leg, causing her to let go of the hood and he threw her into the lake. Then the figure picked up the cable weapon he was using to snag the Chao and swiped at Cream with it. The cable wrapped around her neck and the figure pulled her out of the lake. After he pulled Cream out of the lake, he pulled out some rope and tied Cream's hands up behind her back. And to add insult to injury, he pulled out a thick white cloth and wrapped it around Cream's mouth so she couldn't scream for help. The cloth unfortunately had chloroform on so Cream passed out. Cosmo knew she had to help Cream so she picked up a rock and threw it at the figure. The figure merely caught the rock and threw it back at her. Cosmo dodged the rock and it hit the ground harmlessly.

"Please stop what you're doing or I'll get some help!" threatened Cosmo "Then you'll be sorry!"

"Sorry?" snorted the figure "Why should I be sorry? I'm not sorry for anything except for the fact I haven't killed you yet!"

Cosmo froze in terror at the figure's voice. She knew that voice all too well and she thought she would never hear it again.

"I haven't got time to kill you though Cosmo." said the figure "I have other plans. Bye, bye!"

He scooped Cream up and draped the tied up rabbit on his shoulder. Then he picked up the cage full of Chao and sped off at a terrific speed almost on par with Sonic's. Cosmo was still unable to move because she was so petrified with fear at the figure's voice.

"That voice…" she said to herself "It can't be…It can't be…Marik the Martian!"

Marik was a Martian from the planet Mars and he glorified warfare and detested peace. Sonic had defeated Marik in battle and sent him flying off a cliff to his apparent death**. But it seems Marik had survived because the figure spoke in his voice and used an energy wave like Marik after swiping his arms so it must be Marik who was kidnapping the Chao. But why was he doing it? What was Marik's evil plan now? Cosmo knew she had to go after him and find out. But what could she do? Cosmo couldn't fight! Marik would likely kill her if she tried to stop his evil plans but Cosmo knew she couldn't let Marik get away with this, she had to stop him with or without Sonic. She had seen the direction Marik had run in and he had left a long trail after speeding off on his jet shoes. Cosmo ran off, following the trial.

"I'm coming Cream." she said to herself "I'll save you and all the captured Chao."

But how she was going to do it, she had no idea. Still she had to stop Marik at all costs, even if she died trying…

Cream finally came to after being knocked out by the chloroform that had been placed on the gag the robed figure wrapped around her mouth. After Cream woke up and her vision returned, she observed her surroundings. She was not in the forest anymore; she appeared to be in a very dark and featureless room. The room only had four

walls, a door, a light and some circular objects attached to the wall. Cream tried to walk away only to find out she couldn't. She looked at her arms only to find out there were lasers wrapped around her wrists. She had been laser-bound to the wall. Most people restrained their prisoners with chains or rope but really hi-tech people restrained their victims with special lasers. Laser cuffs were much more effective then chains and rope since they couldn't be broken or snapped. The only way Cream was going to get out of this is if someone pressed a button to turn the lasers off. Cream pulled on the lasers but try as she might, she couldn't get free. She finally gave up the pitiful struggling and wondered on what had happened.

"Where am I?" she said nervously to herself "And why am I stuck to the wall? And where are the captured Chao that horrible robed man kidnapped?"

"I can answer all three at once if you please." said a voice that Cream never thought she'd hear again.

She stared straight in front of her only to see a pair of eyes staring at her from the shadows. The figure stepped into the light, revealing himself to be none other then (who else?) Marik the Martian, alive and well and grinning like a weasel at Cream. Cream gasped in surprise and horror.

"Marik the Martian?" she squealed at the top of her already high pitched voice "It can't be! You're dead!"

Marik scowled at her.

"Are you mentally idiotic or what?" he snapped "Do I look like I'm dead?"

"No you look very much alive." said Cream "But how did you survive? Mr. Sonic knocked you off a cliff and you fell into the water. We saw your body disappear into the water."

Marik just laughed in Cream's face and ended up sending drops of saliva flying into her huge brown eyes.

"Did you really think you can just chuck me off a cliff and it'll all be

over?" he sneered "Martians have incredibly strong muscles and bones which are only made stronger by our exercises and can survive many a nasty fall. I only just survived though and I did lose something due to that fall."

He held up his right hand which was all bandaged up. Cream stared at the Martian's hand with wide eyes.

"What happened to your hand?" she asked.

"I landed rather sharply on a rock and crippled it for life." growled Marik "No thanks to your stupid, egotistical friend Sonic the Hedgehog! So in order to get it working again, I installed cybernetics into it."

And with that, he gripped a sticky-out bit on the bandage and slowly began to unwrap the bandage from around his hand. Cream stared at his hand as Marik unwrapped the bandage. Then her eyes widened in terror at what she saw. Marik had unwrapped his hand and what he now revealed was a brand new cybernetic hand complete with a metal casing, silver polish and five sharp claws on each finger. He clearly seemed pleased with his metal hand because he was grinning wickedly at it.

"Behold Cream, my new hand!" he cackled "It's much more fearsome then before, I'll be able to scratch people oh so marvellously and most of all…I can do THIS with it!"

He pointed a sharp finger at Cream like a pistol and then without warning, a brilliant jolt of white electricity shot out of his hand like a bullet and hit Cream. The rabbit squealed in pain as electricity surged up her tiny body. Marik now had the ability to electrocute or zap people with his new cyborg hand and he seemed very pleased with it. Marik eventually stopped zapping Cream and the rabbit panted heavily. She sagged down slightly with the only thing stopping her from falling to the floor were the lasers around her wrists. Marik laughed at the rabbit's state.

"Ah, I just love hurting children." he purred "It's funnier when they scream in pain then when an adult does."

Cream straightened herself up and stared at Marik.

"So, why have you kidnapped me and all those poor Chao?" she asked.

Marik flashed a devilish grin at the little rabbit. His eyes seemed to be on fire because they looked like they were burning with excitement.

"You'll wish you hadn't asked chocolate eyes." he sneered threateningly "Since Sonic the Hedgehog threw my Energy Diamond away and now it's lost forever, I need a new diamond if I'm going to defeat him."

Cream listened, dreading to think how the Chao fitted into all this.

"So in order to make a new one." continued Marik "I've been kidnapping those disgusting Chao and bringing them to the laboratory I have on this ship."

"Ship?" said Cream "Are we on a ship like?"

"Yes Cream, my ship in fact." said Marik, pointing to himself "And once I'm sure I have enough Chao, I'm going to use them in my experiments to make brand new Energy Diamonds!"

And with that he let fly a loud grating cackle and electricity sparkled wildly in his fingers. Cream gasped so loudly you'd think it was a quiet scream.

"You monster!" she screamed, tugging on her restraints "You can't do that to those poor Chao! Chao are special and must be treated fairly!"

"And I'm supposed to care?" said Marik in a voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Yes you are you heartless monster!" screamed Cream, tears began to pour from her eyes like a leaky tap "Chao aren't meant to be experimented on! They should be cared for and they should be running free in their gardens! You can't just take them away and use them in an experiment! That's just horrible! Especially since one of

the Chao you've kidnapped is my pet Chao Cheese!"

"Too bad." said Marik, not at all affected by Cream's ranting "I don't care for cutesy little squishy things, I squash them flat or kill them horribly. I can't stand cute fuzzy creatures! They make me vomit just thinking about how adorable they are! Cute creatures should die and stay dead, end of story!"

"How horrible can you get?" sobbed Cream.

"As horrible as I wish." said Marik casually "That's what Martians are famous for you numbskull. Now once I've created my new stash of Energy Diamonds, I will defeat Sonic, ransack the kingdom and turn Mobius into a war loving hell hole! And no one is going to stop me, not even that puny plant Cosmo the Seedrian!"

He walked away from Cream, laughing wickedly.

"You can't do this!" yelled Cream, pulling on her restraints "Let me go! And let those Chao go too…"

"Oh will you shut up you loud-mouthed moron?" snapped Marik.

He pointed at Cream and zapped her again. Cream squealed in pain as Marik zapped her. Marik ceased his attack and Cream's head flopped down. That electrical surge was powerful enough to knock her out and it did just that.

"I think I should serve you for dinner or something when I'm finished kidnapping Chao." Marik said to the knocked out Cream "I'm pretty sure you'll taste lovely with some Martian rocks and a bit of salt to add the flavour…"

He continued to talk to himself as he walked out of the room. Cream was alone in the dark room. Even though she had been knocked out, her mind was still buzzing with thoughts and prayers.

Oh Cosmo? Where are you? thought Cream.

With Sonic and the others busy and no one else around, Cosmo was Cream and the Chao's only hope of getting out of here alive. The only trouble was… would she succeed…?

Meanwhile, Cosmo followed Marik's trial all the way through the Great Forest. While following the trial, she walked past the Lake of Rings, a lake that produced magical rings every twenty-four hours. Tails and Cosmo paid a visit to the lake in order to get a ring and use it to cure Sonic when he was corrupted by Marik's Energy Diamond***. When Cosmo passed the lake, she stopped herself and walked back to it. She recognized the lake and suddenly had an idea.

"Maybe I can use one of the lake's power rings to help me defeat Marik." she said to herself.

The only problem was she had no knowing when the ring would appear although she could make an approximate guess. When the ring appeared for Tails and Cosmo when they first visited the lake, it happened around half past three and judging from the sun's position (since Cosmo didn't have a watch she needed to look at the sun for the time), it must be at least half past three now. Cosmo picked up a long stick that lay near the lake and prepared for the ring to appear. A few seconds later, the centre of the lake bubbled madly and a shiny golden ring appeared from underneath the water. Cosmo reached out with the stick but she couldn't quite reach it. In order to reach it, she jumped into the lake and reached out even further. The ring started to descend but Cosmo just managed to hook it with the stick in the nick of time and she pulled the ring towards her. Cosmo grabbed the ring off the stick, put the stick back on the bank and climbed out of the lake.

"I have no idea what power the ring is going to give me but hopefully enough to stop Marik's evil scheme." she said, putting the ring in a pocket on her skirt.

Now that she had a weapon, she continued following the long thin trial Marik left behind from his jet shoes after zooming off. Fortunately, she didn't have far to go. A couple of minutes later, Cosmo reached the end of the trial and saw one thing she couldn't stand the sight of, a Martian ship. The ship was your typical flying saucer design complete with a shiny chrome body, flat disc shape and four long legs that acted as landing gear. The one thing about

Martian ships was despite their flat appearance, they were massive on the inside. Martian ships contained a dungeon, a cockpit, a laboratory and a kitchen in case any of the crew got hungry. How they managed to fit so many rooms into a flat disc shaped spaceship, Cosmo would never know. She knew for sure Marik, Cream and the Chao were onboard that ship, the only problem she had was she needed to get in. Martian ships had a boarding ramp that lowers down to let people out or in. Cosmo had to wait for Marik to lower the boarding ramp so she could sneak inside and save everyone. Cosmo tip-toed behind one of the landing legs so if Marik lowered the boarding ramp, he wouldn't see her. Cosmo peeked around from behind the leg so she could see if Marik had left yet.

Then suddenly the underbelly of the ship hissed loudly and the boarding ramp lowered. It hit the ground with a clunk and Marik the Martian walked down the steps to the ground. He had put his hooded robe back on so no one would recognize him. It worked before since Cream and Cosmo didn't know it was him until he spoke so it would work a second time. Marik also had an empty cage ready to fill with more Chao and his snatching cable weapon to catch them with. Cosmo assumed he was going to try and get more Chao. Marik pulled a remote out of his robe pocket, aimed over his shoulder and pressed a button. The boarding ramp was beginning to rise. Cosmo leaped for it and managed to grab hold of the bottom of the ramp. She climbed further up the ramp and it finally closed back up into the ship's underbelly. Marik thought he heard something climbing on the boarding ramp so he lowered the ramp again to check. There was nothing there so Marik shrugged it off and closed the boarding ramp once again. He walked away from his ship and headed off into the forest to kidnap more precious Chao for his nefarious scheme. He could almost picture the Energy Diamonds he'd be creating now.

As for Cosmo, she felt disgusted to be on an actual Martian ship but she knew she had to be there in order to save Cream and the Chao. The only problem she had now was, she had no idea where Cream or the Chao were. Cosmo had a feeling Cream might be in the dungeon but some nagging feeling was telling her the Chao probably aren't with her. Cosmo decided to free the Chao first and then get Cream. But there was no knowing where Marik would have

put the Chao. Yet for some reason, Cosmo had a feeling the Chao were in the laboratory. Cosmo had never been on a Martian ship before so she had no idea where anything was. The only way to find out where the Chao were located was to search everywhere. Cosmo could see the first door that was located on her left hand side was the cockpit since it was marked with the word "cockpit" in big red capital letters. Cosmo walked down the corridor to another door that was marked with the word "kitchen". Cosmo did not want to see what a Martian kitchen looked like so she walked straight past the door. The next door she came across was marked with the word "Laboratory: Caution when entering!". Cosmo grabbed the door handle and tugged on it. The door opened and Cosmo slipped into the lab.

The lab was pretty small with a lot of steel cupboards, a table and various scientific equipment such as test tubes, tongs, tweezers, Bunsen burners and test tube racks. Cosmo stared at the equipment with fascination. It was a mystery to her what Martians possibly did in these kind of labs but she didn't even want to think about what experiments Martians did because they were bound to be gruesome and horrifying. As Cosmo walked around the table, she heard the faint sound of Chao crying for help in their native language. Cosmo looked in a cupboard and found all the captured Chao trapped inside glass cages. One thing that took Cosmo by surprise is there were a lot more Chao then just the ones she and Cream had seen Marik kidnapping so it was pretty obvious Marik had been at this for a while. What on Mobius did Marik want with so many Chao? Whatever he wanted them for, it was bound to be horrible. Cosmo knew she had to get the Chao out before they were experimented on. Cosmo pulled a glass cage out of the cupboard and wondered on how to open it. There didn't appear to be a hatch or a door anywhere on the glass. This only begged the question as to how did Marik get the Chao in there if there's no hatch of door? There must be something Cosmo was missing about these cages. Cosmo began to wonder if any of the glass walls could move at all. Cosmo felt around the cage as the Chao began squeaking and panicking about inside. They were not happy with being in such a cramped space. Cosmo kept feeling around until finally she moved something. The top of the cage could slide forwards and backwards. Cosmo slid the top of the cage backwards and all the Chao flew out

in an excited frenzy. Cosmo beamed and grabbed another cage. She opened that cage and let the other Chao out. Then she opened another cage, and another and another until finally all the Chao were free. They danced about in excitement and Cosmo laughed with them. But now there was another problem. True the Chao had escaped the glass cages but now they had to get off the ship. The only way to escape the ship was to lower the boarding ramp and Marik had the remote with him so Cosmo wouldn't be able to open the boarding ramp that way. Maybe there was a way to lower the ramp without the remote. Cosmo ran out of the lab with all the freed Chao flying after her. Cosmo ran into the room marked "cockpit".

The cockpit was truly a sight to behold. Choc-a-bloc with dials, buttons, controls and much more, Cosmo wondered how on Mobius Marik flies this thing and remembers which control is which. She had no idea what any of the controls did but she had to lower the boarding ramp so the Chao could escape. But which control lowered the ramp? Cosmo didn't want to try anything in fear of doing something horribly wrong but she had to lower the ramp so he had to try something. Cosmo scanned the sea of dials, buttons and levers on the control pad. One of these buttons or levers had to lower the boarding ramp. Then she spotted a yellow button marked in tiny letters "Lower ramp". Cosmo pressed the button eagerly. The boarding ramp lowered from the underbelly of the ship and down to the ground. Cosmo ran out of the cockpit and led the Chao to the boarding ramp. The freed Chao flew down the ramp and out into the fresh air, chirping happily and excitedly. Cosmo cheered at her success and now she just had to free Cream and then her mission would be complete. Cosmo ran off to find the dungeon, which Cream was likely to be in. She ran down the corridor past the kitchen and then past the laboratory, which had been left open. Cosmo came across a dull grey door that wasn't marked with any words at all. Cosmo had a feeling this was the dungeon. She grabbed the door handle and pulled. The door wouldn't open. It was locked. Marik must have locked it and taken the key with him because Cosmo couldn't see a key anywhere. Now how was she going to get in and rescue Cream? Then Cosmo had an idea. Even though she didn't want to go into the kitchen, she knew there must be something she could use from there to pick the lock with. Cosmo ran away from the door and headed to the door marked "kitchen".

She opened the door and reluctantly stepped inside.

To her surprise, the kitchen wasn't what she thought it would be. It was actually pretty neat and tidy and pretty featureless save for some cupboards, a fridge, a drawer and an oven. There was a table and one chair in the centre of the kitchen. Cosmo ran over to the drawer and pulled it open. She saw a lot of forks, knives and spoons in there. She needed something thin and pointy to pick the lock with. Cosmo searched through the cutlery but she couldn't find anything thin enough. Then she found something long and thing at the back of the drawer. She picked it up and looked at it. It was a needle Martians would poke into their meals to see if they were cooked. If they were cooked the needle would glow red, if they weren't the needle would stay as it is. Cosmo took it with her and left the kitchen behind.

Cosmo ran back to the dungeon door. She bent down, stuck the needle into the lock and began to twist it. She gave the lock a few twists and turns with the needle. Nothing happened so far. Cosmo's heart began to beat fast. Her head was sweating. Cosmo tried once again with the needle. She twisted and turned it in the lock once again. Then after one final tweak, the lock clicked. Cosmo grabbed the door handle and pulled. The door opened. Cosmo slipped inside the room and saw Cream laser bound to the wall, staring at the floor and crying to herself. Cosmo ran over to her.

"Cream. I'm here." she said softly.

Cream stopped snivelling and looked up at Cosmo. Seeing her friend standing right there brought sheer joy to the rabbit's face.

"Cosmo!" she cried "You've come at last! That horrible Martian is planning on using the Chao to make more Energy Diamonds!"

"Oh no!" cried Cosmo "It's a good thing I freed all the Chao before I came to free you."

"You freed all the Chao?" said Cream "Did Cheese go with them?"

"Um…" thought Cosmo.

Then a little squeak came from behind her. It was Cheese. Cheese did fly off with the other Chao and only just remembered that Cream was still on the ship so he flew back into the ship to look for her. Cheese was delighted to see Cream and he hugged her and they rubbed faces together. Cream couldn't hug Cheese back since her arms were restrained.

"Oh Cheese I'm happy to see you too!" said Cream happily "Now how are you going to get me out of here Cosmo?"

"I don't know." said Cosmo sadly "I don't have the remote that can switch off laser cuffs. But I'll get you out somehow I promise."

"That will not be happening I'm afraid my dear!" snarled a terrifying voice that made Cosmo leap ten feet in the air! She turned around only to see Marik the Martian standing there, grinning like a hobgoblin at her.

"Marik…" squeaked Cosmo. Her face went completely white and her heart stopped.

"Snooping as usual I see?" sneered Marik "Well we can't have that can we?"

And with that he aimed his cyborg hand at Cosmo and let fly a fantastic surge of electricity. The surge was so strong Cosmo was flung backwards into the wall. Cream gasped. Cosmo fell to the floor and gasped for breath.

"Since when did you have electrical abilities?" gasped Cosmo.

Marik merely gave her a smug expression and held up his cyborg hand.

"You have a metal hand now?" said Cosmo.

"Yes." said Marik "That fall off the cliff crippled my hand for life so I installed cybernetics into it to get it working again. And boy do I love it!"

He aimed at Cosmo and shocked her again. Cosmo screamed a pained, shrilling scream as electricity surged up her body. Cream

could only watch helplessly as Cosmo was electrocuted.

"Marik…Ungh…please…stop…!" begged Cosmo, trying to fight the pain.

Marik obeyed and stopped zapping Cosmo. The Seedrian collapsed and panted heavily.

"It's just a pity there isn't enough spark in these fingers to kill." he muttered "I can only knock you out at best. No matter, I have other ways of ending lives you know and they are all much better then simple electric shocks."

Cosmo struggled to get back onto her feet. The electrical surges had done a huge deal of pain to her and just trying to get up felt like hard work. Unfortunately, while Cosmo was trying to get back up, Marik spotted the ring she had gotten from the Lake of Rings earlier poking out of her pocket slightly. Marik ran up to her, grabbed her by the neck with his metal hand and held her up. He could squeeze a lot harder with his metal hand and Cosmo soon realized it as Marik began to squeeze harder on her neck. Then Marik swiped the ring out of Cosmo's pocket and threw her against the wall as hard as he could. Cosmo felt like her spine had broken. Marik stared at the magical ring he held in his organic hand with fascination.

"What is this gleaming gold beauty I see before me?" he purred, entranced by its golden gleam.

"I know what it is!" cried Cream happily "It's a magical ring that comes from the Lake of Rings in the Great Forest! Mother told me all about them and she says the rings can make you all powerful…"

She suddenly realized she was telling Marik what the ring was and she closed her mouth.

"Oops." she mumbled.

Marik glared at Cosmo angrily.

"So you thought you could use this thing against me Cosmo?" he sneered mockingly and twirling the ring around his finger "Well too bad!"

And with that he grabbed the ring with both hands and then proceeded to snap it in half with his brute strength. The moment the ring snapped, its golden glow died down to a dull dirty yellow. Cosmo couldn't believe her eyes. Her only hope of defeating Marik the Martian, snapped into pieces.

"No!" she cried as Marik threw the pieces on the floor in front of her feet. Cosmo picked up the pieces and stared helplessly at them. She felt like she wanted to break down in tears. Cream felt sorry for Cosmo, knowing this was all her fault. If she hadn't blabbered, Marik wouldn't have snapped the ring in two.

"I'm sorry Cosmo." said Cream sadly.

"It's alright Cream." said Cosmo, choking back tears "All hope isn't lost you know. Cheese, get him!" she cried.

Cheese obeyed and charged at Marik. Marik just held up his hand and Cheese flew into it. Then his fingers closed around Cheese and he squeezed the Chao hard enough to suffocate him.

"You're going to have to try harder then that you miserable organisms!" he taunted "A Chao has no chance of defeating someone like me!"

"You let Cheese go this instant!" ordered Cream.

"No, I think I'll rip him in two if you don't mind." said Marik sarcastically "But I need him and the other Chao for my experiments so I'll let him live long enough for that."

"In case you haven't noticed rock head, I freed the other Chao." said Cosmo, smirking "You have no Chao for your experiments now."

"Guess again leaf features!" snarled Marik "After the Chao escaped, I electrocuted one of them and ordered them to get back in the ship or I would shock them all and they did just that. They're all back in their cages and in my laboratory waiting for the experiment to begin!"

Cosmo was about to do ten back-flips in shock. Marik had managed to re-capture all the Chao she had just freed? Her beautiful rescue

plan had been all for nothing! Cosmo sighed in defeat and stared at the floor. Marik had well and truly defeated her. If only Sonic and Tails were here now! Marik walked over to the wall and put Cheese in front of one of the circular objects on the wall. He pulled out a remote control and pressed a button. A laser emitted from the circular object and wrapped around the poor Chao. Now Cheese was trapped just like Cream was. Then Marik seized Cosmo, hauled her onto her feet and lifted her arms up to two circular objects next to Cream. Marik pressed the button on the remote again and a pair of lasers wrapped around Cosmo's wrists. Now she was bound to the wall just like Cream was. All hope was lost for them now. There was no way they could escape from this prison. The Chao were doomed to be turned into diamonds and Cream and Cosmo were doomed to be prisoners forever.

"I wish Sonic was here." said Cream.

"I do too." muttered Cosmo, still staring miserably at the floor.

"Well that egotistical jerk isn't here so get over it!" snarled Marik "Cream, I am going to make a pleasantly delicious rabbit stew out of you." he said, licking his lips.

Cream felt sick. She wanted to throw up all over Marik after he'd said that to her.

"And Cosmo." added Marik "You can join the long list of dead Seedrians like you deserve to!"

He pressed another button on the remote control that activated the lasers. This button didn't turn the lasers on or off though, it made the lasers electrocute the prisoners! Cosmo felt a very painful surge of electrical shocks surging up and down her body. The voltage in the laser cuffs was much higher then that of Marik's hand so Cosmo would be dead in a few seconds time…

Footnotes:

*** All this is going on back in *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 26!**

Don't miss it!

**** See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 24**

***** Who can forget the events of Story 25 in *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* ?**

Cosmo and Cream in an adventure together! Marik the Martian still alive! Chao in danger! A fiendish plot ready to commence! How will this crazy adventure end? Tune in next time for Part 2! Reviews are welcome.

The Cosmo and Cream Adventure 2

Arc 2: The Cosmo and Cream Adventure

Takes place during Story 26 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2

"Yes, yes, YES!" shouted Marik as Cosmo continued to get painfully shocked "I'm finally going to kill that little nuisance once and for all! Just wait till I tell my parents, siblings, or even my good old Uncle Drago!"

Cream cried out pitilessly and helplessly as the electrocuting continued. She stopped crying out to Cosmo and looked away, she couldn't bear to witness her friend's demise. Even Cheese couldn't look. Then suddenly the laser cuffs stopped electrocuting Cosmo and then switched off. Cosmo's unconscious body fell to the ground. Cream looked at Cosmo and was surprised to see she was free. Then suddenly, her laser cuffs switched off too! And so did Cheese's! All three of them were free at last! Marik stared in disbelief. He looked like he was going to throw a fit of insane proportions.

"WHAT?" he shrieked "WHY THE #$% DID THAT HAPPEN?"

"I don't know but I'm glad it did." said Cream "Now we can stop your evil plans Marik!"

Marik ignored her and ran over to inspect the laser cuffs. While Marik inspected them, Cream picked up the unconscious but barely alive Cosmo and slipped out of the dungeon with Cheese closely behind. Marik soon found out what his problem was.

"Ah I see," he said to himself "The high voltage in the laser cuffs picked in inconvenient moment to short circuit and blow a fuse. Oh well, it can easily be repaired." he sighed loudly "In the meantime, I'll just deal with…"

He suddenly realized he was alone in the dungeon. Cream and Cosmo had escaped him. Marik face-palmed himself…with his metal hand and he hurt his face due to how hard it was.

"Ouch! I'm so stupid! Oh! Ow!" he groaned as he rubbed his face with his organic hand.

After he stopped rubbing himself better Marik said "Why does it matter if the prisoners have escaped? They're on MY ship! I know this place forwards, backwards, sideways and up and down! No matter where they hide, I'll be able to find them because I know every possible hiding place on this ship."

So Marik ran to the door and tried to open it but the door had somehow locked itself. Marik groaned in annoyance.

"I always forget the door locks itself when you leave the room!" he moaned "Still, a locked door isn't going to slow me down."

And with that, he swiped both his arms and sent an energy wave hurtling into the door. The door was blown off its hinges and Marik stepped out of the dungeon.

"After I deal with the two miscreants, I'll have to fix this." he said "Now, where are the girls hiding? I do hope they're not hiding in the laboratory or there will be trouble!"

Marik ran down the corridor in search of his victims. They couldn't be far since the whole ship was round and there are only four rooms to hide in so he was bound to find them sometime soon.

As for Cream, she had taken Cosmo into the kitchen, the first room she came across and decided to hide in there. She lay Cosmo down on the floor and locked the door to keep Marik out. Then Cream went back to Cosmo to comfort her. The poor Seedrian was still breathing but she was out cold and covered with slight burn marks from the high voltage of the electrical shocks. Cream felt Cosmo's forehead. It didn't feel too hot or too cold so her temperature was alright.

"Oh Cosmo." said Cream "I do hope you're alright. I wish I had something to make you feel better."

Cheese spotted a sink and called to Cream. Cream could see what Cheese was trying to tell her so she got up and ran over to the sink.

"Maybe some water will make Cosmo feel better." said Cream "If only we had a cup."

She opened some cupboard doors under the sink and began searching through the cupboard. She found a pile of cups at the back and picked out a small green one. Cream put the cup under the tap and filled it up with water. Cream took the cup of water to Cosmo. She raised Cosmo's head up and put the cup to her lips. Cream tipped the cup up slightly so the water would slowly tickle down into her mouth and down her throat. The moment the water began to trickle down her throat, Cosmo's eyes began to open.

"Mmm…" she mumbled as she began to wake up "Oh…I needed a good drink of water…Mmm…"

Cream stopped tipping the cup so Cosmo could get some air. Cosmo stretched her arms and looked at Cream.

"Wh…where am…I Cream?" she slurred sleepily "How…did I…get here?"

"You're in the kitchen Cosmo." said Cream "And how we got out of that dungeon was by pure luck. The laser cuffs turned themselves off for some reason and it's a good thing they did or else you would have been killed."

"Oh thank…goodness…" mumbled Cosmo "That's the…thing with… laser…cuffs. They're…always malfunction…ing."

"So Cosmo, what do we do now?" asked Cream "Marik's bound to be looking for us."

"We are going…to stop his evil plan." said Cosmo "We're going to… free all the Chao and put Marik back in his place…cough! cough!"

"How are we going to free the Chao Cosmo?" asked Cream.

"cough! They're in the laboratory." said Cosmo "They're trapped in glass cages and the only way you can open them is to slide the top of the cages away so they'll open and let all the Chao out."

"But how do we get the Chao off the ship?" said Cream "Is there an escape hatch or something like that?"

"I know how to lower the boarding ramp so once the Chao are free, I'll go into the cockpit and press the button and lower the boarding ramp." said Cosmo "That way, the Chao, and we can get off safely."

"That sounds like a plan Cosmo." said Cream happily "But what about Marik? We can't possibly beat him by ourselves!"

"We leave him alone and then we get Sonic to deal with him." said Cosmo "Without an Energy Diamond, Marik has no chance of beating Sonic this time."

Then suddenly there was a sharp knock on the door and frantic twisting of the door handle. Cosmo and Cream almost leaped out of their skins. Marik had found them! They had to hide and then try to escape without Marik seeing them! Cosmo and Cream dived for cover under the table. The door exploded to pieces and Marik staggered into the kitchen, growling angrily.

"Don't think you can hide from me you diminutive peace suckers!" snarled Marik "I know this ship like the back of my hand so I'm bound to know where you're hiding!"

Cosmo grasped Cream in a tight hug and held her close to keep her from screaming. Cheese tried to refrain from making a frantic cry. Marik stomped straight past the table and yanked the cupboard doors open he began to search through the cupboards as he guessed the two were hiding in there. Cream and Cosmo saw their chance to escape. They crawled out from under the table and headed towards the door. Unfortunately, Marik had finally finished looking in the cupboards and he spotted them coming out from under the table.

"Ah ha!" he yelled.

He fired a jolt of electricity at them. In a split second, Cream, Cosmo and Cheese lifted the table up to block Marik's attacks. The electric shock hit the table and did no damage. Then using all their strength, they lifted the table upright and then pushed it over so it would fall on Marik. Marik drew his arm back and with a lightening flash, he punched the falling table and broke it into tiny pieces. The table had been reduced to splinters of wood that littered the floor. Marik was not pleased he had damaged his own property but if he caught Cream and Cosmo, it was worth it. Speaking of which…where were Cream and Cosmo? The two had escaped after pushing the table on Marik. Marik growled angrily and ran out of the kitchen after them.

Cosmo and Cream ran for their lives down the corridor. Cosmo took lead because she knew where the laboratory was. Unfortunately, the girls didn't get very far. Marik sped down the corridor, leaped over them in perfect fashion, somersaulted, and landed in front of them, blocking their way down the corridor. Cosmo and Cream stopped and stared at him.

"And where do you think, you are going ladies?" he crooned "You wouldn't happen to be going to the laboratory would you?"

"Good guess." said Cream "How did you know?"

"I'm psychic." said Marik sarcastically "How do you think I knew?"

Cream said nothing and hid behind Cosmo, whimpering in fear.

"Now, if you two ladies would be so kind as to get back in the dungeon, I'll be happy as pie." said Marik.

"I'd rather die then be your prisoner." said Cosmo coldly.

"Well then, I'll be happy to oblige you tree hugging, flower kissing, peace sucking wimp!" cackled Marik.

He raised his metal hand and prepared to plunge his claws into Cosmo when suddenly, Cosmo gave him a swift kick in between his legs! Marik's eyes almost popped out due to how wide he'd opened them and pain flooded around his lower area. He went all cross eyed, gritted his teeth, fell to his knees, clutched his groin and tried

as hard as he could not to scream in pain. Then he fell on his side and grimaced, tears forming in his eyes. Cream laughed at him.

"Way to go Cosmo!" she cheered.

"I don't enjoy doing that." muttered Cosmo "But Marik deserved it. Now let's go before he recovers."

"Right." said Cream "Stay close to me Cheese." she said to Cheese.

The girls stepped over the pained Marik the Martian and ran on down the corridor with Cheese keeping close to Cream. After they disappeared around a corner, Marik lifted his head up and growled to himself.

"I think I hate Cosmo even more now!"

Never before, had Marik experienced so much pain. Cosmo's kick to the groin hurt even more then when he crippled his hand! It would take him a while to recover at least.

Meanwhile, the girls found a door marked with the word "Laboratory". This was where all the Chao Marik had captured were kept. Cosmo opened the door and she and Cream slipped inside. Cosmo bolted the door to keep Marik at bay. As for Cream, she was taken aback at all the scientific equipment on display on the table. Strange colourful liquid bubbled in test tubes and glass bottles and the tiny flames that emit from Bunsen burners lightly flickered. Cream picked up a pair of tongs and squeezed the handle to make the little jaws open.

"What is all this stuff?" she asked, putting the tongs down and staring at the liquid in the test tube "It looks really complicated."

"That's science equipment." said Cosmo "And for goodness sake, don't touch anything! We don't know what any of this liquid stuff in the test tubes will do."

Cream obeyed and kept her hands to her side.

"So, where are all the Chao?" asked Cream.

"In that cupboard." said Cosmo, pointing to the steel cupboard she had found the Chao in earlier.

Cosmo and Cream ran over to the cupboard and opened the doors. Then the poor girls got a terrible shock. The Chao weren't in the cupboard! The shelves were completely empty! Cosmo couldn't understand it, she swore on her mother's soul the Chao were in there when she rescued them earlier.

"There's nothing here." said Cream quietly.

"But…but…but…but…but I don't understand." stammered Cosmo weakly "I found them in there the first time, why aren't they here?"

"Maybe Mr. Marik has hidden them somewhere else?" suggested Cream "Cheese, can you look around and see if you can find anything?"

"Chao." said Cheese.

Cheese flew gracefully around the laboratory calling out in Chao language to see if he could get a response. He flew past a smaller steel cupboard and called to it. No sound came out from inside. Cheese flew to another cupboard and called to it. No response. Cream and Cosmo looked under the table and found nothing. Cosmo was beginning to worry. If the Chao weren't in the laboratory, where were they? The certainly weren't in the dungeon and they didn't appear to be in the kitchen because when Cosmo and Cream were in there a minute ago, they didn't see any Chao at all. And there was no way the Chao were in the cockpit…wait a minute. Was there? Cosmo suddenly began to think. Maybe Marik hid them in the cockpit after recapturing them. But why would he hide them in the cockpit? Probably because they wouldn't expect to find glass cages full of Chao in the cockpit. Cream snapped Cosmo out of her train of thoughts.

"Cosmo, I don't think there are any Chao in here." said Cream "Me and Cheese can't find them anywhere."

"I think I have an idea on where they are." said Cosmo "Marik might have hidden them in the one room we'd least expect to find them in, the ship's cockpit."

"Why would Marik hide the Chao in there?" asked Cream "He can't experiment on them in there."

"Because we wouldn't expect to find the Chao in a room like that." said Cosmo "Now let's go, I know they way."

They ran to the door and unbolted it. Cosmo put a finger to her lips and shushed at Cream. Cream remained still and didn't make a noise. Cosmo poked her head through the door and looked both ways to make sure Marik wasn't there lying in wait for them. The coast was clear so Cosmo and Cream crept out of the lab. Then suddenly, Marik leaped out from around the corner and hit Cosmo in the back with a jolt of electricity! Cosmo screamed and fell to her hands and knees. Cream jumped back against the wall and gasped at Cosmo. Marik advanced on her and put his foot on her back. Then he pressed down and forced Cosmo onto her stomach.

"You always did hate surprise attacks didn't you?" he sneered "That's one advantage I'll always have over you. And did you like my little surprise in the lab? I can almost imagine your baffled face when you found no Chao in the cupboards!"

"Where have you hidden them you vile man?" squealed Cream, putting on a brave face.

"Ah, ha!" snorted Marik "Where's the fun in telling you? I've hidden them in a place where you'll never find them!"

"It wouldn't happen to be the cockpit would it?" croaked Cosmo.

Marik glared at her with his fiery orange eyes.

"Now why on Mars would I hide science equipment in the cockpit?" he snorted "Even though it would have been a good idea, I've hidden the Chao in an even better place then the cockpit!"

"But-But a Martian sh-sh-ship only has f-f-four rooms." stammered Cosmo nervously "Where else can you p-possibly h-h-hide

something?"

"Like I said, where's the fun in telling?" sneered Marik "Use that old rust bucket in your head that you call a brain and work it out! But I wouldn't bother since you're going to die now! And I wouldn't try kicking me in the middle area again since I'll be prepared for it!"

Marik raised his foot and prepared to slam it down on Cosmo's back. But before Marik could stomp on Cosmo, Cheese flew into Marik's face and fisted him in the eye.

"Ouch!" yelped Marik, clutching his eye "You little beast, I'll mash you to rock paste you flying teardrop!"

While Marik was grumbling, Cream took it upon herself to swiftly kick Marik in the bum. Marik yelped and fell on his face. He rubbed his sore bottom and glared at Cream, his teeth bearing and his eyes full of rage.

"That's what you get for being so horrible and nasty!" said Cream hotly.

"You'll be chewing on that big whooping foot of yours once I shove it down your throat you repulsive, overly polite and disgustingly sweet dung heap!" roared Marik.

Marik pointed his finger at Cream like a sword and blasted her with a colossal jolt of electricity. Cream was blown off her feet and sent flying into the wall. Cream slid down the wall and onto the floor. Cheese tried to attack Marik but Marik swiped his arm and smacked Cheese away. The Chao hit the wall head first and slid down to the floor. Cream sat up on her bottom and cowered against the wall as Marik advanced on her.

"Marik, please don't hurt me!" begged Cream.

"Well you hurt me so why shouldn't I hurt you, you long eared beast?" snarled Marik.

With that said, he electrocuted Cream again. The young rabbit screamed at the top of her high pitched voice. Her screams were high, shrilling and piercing but Marik didn't care, he loved the sound

of children screaming in pain. Cosmo got to her feet and saw what Marik was doing to poor Cream. Thinking fast, Cosmo had a plan. She ran into the lab and picked up a glass bottle that was spherical in shape with a long neck sprouting from the top and full of red liquid. She ran back out, only to see Marik still shocking Cream. Marik eventually stopped however to let Cream gasp for air. Cream panted and gasped for breath the moment Marik stopped.

"I do wish I had enough voltage in my fingertips to kill someone." muttered Marik "But I wonder, will I kill someone if I keep it up?"

"Oh Marik…please, I…beg you! Don't kill me!" pleaded Cream, tears about to fall down her cute little face.

"Do you think begging for mercy with those large brown eyes and that cute little pout is supposed to blow me over?" snorted Marik "I can't stand cute things so don't you dare pull a cute face at me! You'll just make me sick!"

And with that, he electrocuted her again! Cream screamed once again as Cosmo looked away from the sight in disgust. Marik began to cackle with glee as he continued to electrocute Cream. Cosmo couldn't stand to watch Cream get hurt any more so she ran up to Marik and tapped him on the shoulder. Marik stopped what he was doing and turned around to scowl at Cosmo.

"What do you want flower face?" he snarled "I'm busy here!"

"How do you like a face full of this?" shrieked Cosmo.

She gave the bottle a sharp jolt which in turn made the liquid inside fly out of the bottle and into Marik's face. Unfortunately for Marik, the red liquid in the bottle was extremely corrosive and Marik's face ended up being severely scolded and burnt.

"AAAAAHHHHHH!" screamed Marik, falling on his knees "OH MY GOD THAT BURNS SO BADLY!"

While Marik was distracted, Cosmo threw the bottle at him and helped Cream onto her feet. Cream ran over to scoop up Cheese, who was still unconscious and the girls ran off down the corridor.

Marik stopped clutching his scolded face and growled. His face was full of burn marks and his eyes were a pool of fiery red. His face hurt so much he couldn't run after the girls so he stayed put and watched them get away.

"Run, run, run as fast as you can girls." he said coldly "I'll only find you once again. You can't hide on this ship; I'll always be able to find you. And you won't find the Chao anywhere because I've hidden them in a place too subtle for your primitive minds to work out."

Further down the corridor, Cosmo and Cream came across a door marked the word "cockpit". They both ran frantically ran inside and closed the door. They fell on the floor, gasping and panting heavily. Cream hugged Cheese tightly. Cosmo knelt down next to Cream.

"Are you alright Cream?" asked Cosmo with a voice of concern "Did Marik severely harm you?"

"I only have a few burn marks here and there from Marik's electric attacks." said Cream "But I'm OK."

"I do wonder why Marik is such a sadistic psychopath?" wondered Cosmo "Why do Martians live like this?"

"I dunno." said Cream, letting go of Cheese.

"Me neither." said Cosmo "If only I could talk some sense to Marik or indeed any Martian for that matter then that way I wouldn't have to worry about them and neither would anyone else."

"That would be nice." said Cream agreeably "But right now, we've got to save those poor Chao before Marik uses them in his evil plan."

"Right, the Chao, of course." said Cosmo absentmindedly "Now the cockpit is the place we'd least suspect to find the Chao so Marik's probably hidden them in here."

"But I don't see any Chao anywhere." said Cream "I only see buttons and little light thingies."

Cosmo looked around the cockpit and true to what Cream had just said, there was nothing here. The only thing in the cockpit was her and Cream.

"But, the Chao *must* be here!" blurted Cosmo "They're not in the dungeon, they're not in the kitchen and they're not in the lab so they must be in here! There aren't any more rooms on this ship!"

"You mean to tell me there are only four rooms on this ship?" asked Cream.

"Exactly." said Cosmo "We've been in three of them and this is the last one so why aren't the Chao here?"

"Maybe there's a secret door or something somewhere that the Chao have been put in?" suggested Cream.

Even though this was a highly unlikely theory, Cosmo had a sneaky suspicion Cream was right. So she looked around the cockpit again to see if she could find anything that looked like it could open or slide. The control panel didn't have any doors underneath it so that was ruled out. Cosmo felt around the wall to see if anything moved. Cream decided to help by feeling some of the walls to see if anything moved. Cheese for some reason was listening to the floor as if he was expecting to hear Chao calling from underneath. Then suddenly as he got to the centre of the floor, he heard a faint cooing noise that sounded an awful lot like Chao talking to each other. Cheese got excited and called over to Cream and Cosmo.

"What is it Cheese? Have you found something?" asked Cream.

Cheese nodded and pointed to the floor. Cream bent down and listened with her long ears. Surely enough, she heard the cooing Chao from under the floor. Rabbits have very good hearing so Cream was bound to hear something like that.

"I can hear Chao under the floor." said Cream.

"Then maybe that's where Marik has hidden them." said Cosmo "We need to find out how to get under the floor so we can save the Chao."

Cream began to feel all over the floor to see if there was something that slides or pushes. But she couldn't find anything so far. Every bit of the floor seemed perfectly normal. Cheese flew up to the control pad and thought that maybe one of the buttons or levers or anything on the control pad could open the floor. Cheese however, had no idea which of the gazillions of controls was the right one. Cheese leaned against a lever accidentally and pushed it back. It was a good thing he did because when the lever was pushed back, the centre of the floor slid away to one side, revealing the glass cages containing the Chao underneath. Cream and Cosmo beamed with joy.

"You managed to open the floor Cheese!" cried Cream "Well done!"

Cheese squeaked happily.

"Now let's get these cages open and the Chao will be free." said Cosmo, pulling the first one from out of the secret compartment in the floor.

"Which one of these buttons lowers the boarding ramp?" asked Cream, looking at the control pad.

"There's a yellow button that says "lower ramp"." explained Cosmo as she opened the first cage "Press that one."

Cream looked for the button amongst the sea of controls. Cosmo pulled all the cages out of the compartment in the floor and opened them all. The Chao flew out of their cages and hugged Cosmo as if to say "thank you!" Cosmo laughed with them. Cream finally found the button that lowered the ship's boarding ramp and pressed it quickly. The sound of the boarding ramp hissing and whirring as it lowered emitted from behind the door.

"I've lowered the ramp Cosmo!" exclaimed Cream.

"Good." said Cosmo "Now Chao, fly for your lives!"

She opened the door to let them out. The freed Chao flew out of the room like a swarm of frantic bees. Marik the Martian, who had recovered from his burn marks, ran up to the cockpit, only to get run

down by the fleeing Chao. The Chao all flew over Marik and dived down the boarding ramp to freedom. They were so busy fleeing, they didn't even notice the fact they'd just run down Marik. After all the Chao and finally escaped from the ship, Marik got back to his feet and growled fiercely.

"I've had enough of stupid Chao now!" he growled "I'll make my Energy Diamonds out of something else!"

He stormed angrily into the cockpit and wasn't pleased to find trespassers in there. The cockpit was the most important room on the ship after all. Cosmo and Cream jumped in fright and Cheese hid behind Cream in fear. Marik advanced on Cosmo, glaring at her with his orange eyes. The Seedrian backed away from him only to find herself falling on her bottom and backing up against the wall, staring up in fear at the tiny terror that is Marik the Martian. Cream hid her face in her hands, unable to witness Cosmo's inevitable demise. Marik pointed a sharp metallic finger at her. It trembled slightly in rage.

"I have had just about enough of you wrecking my plans and getting in the way all the time you tulip twerp!" he snarled "It's time to finally end this stupid rivalry once and for all!"

Cosmo gasped and turned her head away. She closed her eyes tightly and prepared for the oncoming electric attack. Marik, still pointing his finger at her, activated his electrical surge. But the finger only sparked harmlessly. Cosmo opened her eyes slightly only to find out, to her relief, she was still alive. Marik looked in confusion at his finger and tried to use an electric spark again. Again, all it did was spark. Cream uncovered her face to see what was happening and was relieved to see Marik having problems. Marik kept trying to use an electric attack but all his finger did was spark. He tried all five fingers but they only sparked harmlessly. Then Marik suddenly realized what the problem was. A small blue dome in the palm of his metal hand had been cracked.

"Oh damn it!" he cursed "The voltage compactor is broken! Must have happened when those wretched Chao ran me over while escaping! Oh well, I'll have to kill you in a different way Cosmo!"

"Oh Marik please!" begged Cosmo "Have you no pity?"

"Pity?" sniffed Marik "What does that even mean? I guess it means something stupid and soppy doesn't it?"

Without another word, he grabbed Cosmo by the neck and hauled her up to his height. The Seedrian grasped his arm and desperately tried to get his fingers off from around her neck but Marik's grip was much too strong. He began to squeeze as hard as he could on Cosmo's neck. Marik was attempting to choke her to death now and he wasn't going to hold back this time. Cream watched this and didn't know what to do. She knew she had to help Cosmo but she couldn't take on Marik all by herself. Maybe she could stall him for a while to give Cosmo chance to escape. But what if she couldn't make it too? Cream knew it was risky, but she was willing to take it. Cream ran up to Marik and grabbed him sharply by the collar. Marik yelped and gagged as Cream pulled him back. He dropped Cosmo, gasping and spluttering on the floor and tried to pull back on his leather jacket. Cream continued to pull him back and then sharply kicked him in the back of the leg, causing him to bend down. Cheese added insult to injury by bouncing up and down on Marik's helmet, the sharp thuds hurting his head.

"That's for trying to kill Cosmo you monster!" yelled Cream crossly "I'm sick and tired of your meanness and I won't put up with it a minute longer!"

"Oh will you shut up you obnoxious little brat!" snarled Marik, grabbing Cheese and throwing him into the control pad as hard as he could.

He grabbed Cream by the arms and flipped her over himself and onto the floor in front of him.

"Of all the annoying people I've had the misfortune to encounter in my life time, you are the most annoying!" growled Marik "So now, I'll take it upon myself to kill you first!"

He raised his metallic hand and bared his claws. He aimed at Cream's chest and was about to plunge his claws into her when suddenly an alarm began to wail as loud as it could. Marik, Cream

and Cosmo looked around frantically as the room turned bright red and the alarm continued to wail.

"What's happening?" asked Cream "Is there a fire?"

"That's not a fire alarm Cream." said Cosmo.

"She's right." said Marik "But I hope it's not what I think it is!"

He ran over to the control pad where Cheese lay. The Chao rubbed himself better and fluttered off the pad. Marik then found out what the alarm was about. Cheese had accidentally pressed the self-destruct button! All Martian ships carried those in case someone tried to steal the ship so whenever someone tried to steal the ship, the crew would blow up the ship so no one could have it.

"No!" shrieked Marik "Your idiot Chao has pressed the self-destruct button! THIS SHIP IS GOING TO EXPLODE!"

"Oh no!" cried Cream "We're all going to die!"

"No we're not Cream." said Cosmo, taking her by the hand "We are getting out of here."

She and Cream ran out of the cockpit as fast as they could. Luckily for them, the boarding ramp was still lowered but it was beginning to rise back up now. Cosmo and Cream ran down the rising ramp as fast as they could. Unfortunately, the ramp had risen too high for them to jump off without hurting themselves. Cream however, had another way of getting down. She held Cosmo's hand, flapped her ears and took flight. She flew off the rising ramp and down to the ground. After Cream and Cosmo landed, they ran again to get out of range; otherwise they would get caught in the explosion and get severely injured.

Back on the ship, Marik was trying desperately to stop the ship from self-destructing. He pressed every button on the control pad but nothing was working. When a ship's self-destruct sequence activates, the control pad stops working so Marik couldn't do anything to stop it. Seeing as he couldn't save his ship, he decided to escape before he got blown up with it. Marik ran out of the cockpit

and to the boarding ramp, which had risen back up so now he was trapped. Marik ran off again, desperate to find a way to get off the ship. But he was too late.

KA-BOOM!

The sleek, silver, flat disc shaped ship erupted into an incredible ball of fire and thick grey smoke. Cosmo and Cream fell to the ground with Cosmo on top of Cream to protect her. Debris flew everywhere, knocking trees over as they struck the ground. Marik was sent flying through the air like a torpedo and he fell down to the ground like a missile seeking its target. He struck the ground head first and his fall was so powerful he literally made a small crater in the ground! He had also embedded the spikes of his helmet into the thick soil so now his helmet was stuck. Marik also passed out and fell flat on his stomach. To add to his bad luck, a black and white hover car with a red siren on the roof hovered by and stopped beside him. It was a police car belonging to the MPD (Mobian Police Department) and it was on patrol. The driver of the car stepped out and gasped at what he saw. The driver was a grey hedgehog with only four quills, a black moustache and a blue police uniform.

"Good heavens!" cried the officer "It's that Martian who killed the king and queen the other week*!"

"It is? Where? Lemme see Melchett!" cried another officer who was still in the car.

The hedgehog officer, whose name was Melchett, scooped up the unconscious Marik the Martian and stuffed him in the back of the car. He pulled Marik's helmet out from the ground and tossed it in the car next to Marik. The other officer, who was a big fat gopher with grey fur and a goofy voice, turned around to see Marik.

"Hey it IS him!" squealed the gopher "But I thought Sonic killed him."

"Well it's obvious he didn't Big Dave." said Melchett "Now let's drive this tiny psychopath to jail before he wakes up."

And with that, Melchett slammed his foot on the pedal and the police hover car sped off and drove away. It was now heading for jail,

where Marik would be safely locked away for good. No one would have to worry about him ever again…or wouldn't they?

Later that day, Cosmo and Cream sat by the Chao garden and watched the happy Chao playing and splashing about in the lake. Cheese had decided to join in with them and was having a good time. It was truly a grand and wonderful sight for Chao lovers to behold.

"The Chao garden looks a lot better now it has Chao in it." said Cosmo.

"I agree." said Cream "But we wouldn't have been able to see this if it wasn't for you. You saved all the Chao Cosmo. You're a hero."

"I…I am?" said Cosmo.

"Yes you are Cosmo!" said Cream happily "You saved all the Chao and you risked your life to try and save me!"

She grasped her friend into a hug.

"Thank you so much Cosmo." said Cream sweetly.

Cosmo, beaming, hugged Cream back.

"You're welcome Cream." said Cosmo "And thank you, for saving my life a couple of times back there."

"You're very welcome Cosmo." said Cream as she and Cosmo broke the hug "I can't wait to tell Mr. Sonic about the adventure we've had today."

"I bet he'll laugh his head off when we tell him we beat Marik the Martian all by ourselves." said Cosmo "I'm so glad that terrible Martian is gone for good."

"So now we don't have to worry about him anymore." said Cream with a smile.

Then some of the Chao that had been rescued flew up to Cosmo carrying something. The Chao had carefully woven some flowers

together to make a flower crown. It was just as bright and colourful as the one Cream made earlier. Cosmo was astonished by the crown and was even more astonished when the Chao put it on her head and cooed happily. Cosmo laughed with them.

"What's the flower crown for?" she asked.

"I think the Chao are saying thank you Cosmo and the flower crown is their gift of gratitude to you." suggested Cream.

The Chao nodded as if to say "That's right".

"Well thank you." said Cosmo to the Chao "The crown is just wonderful. And it was a pleasure to save all your lives from Marik the Martian. You won't have to worry about him again."

The Chao all squeaked and danced about excitedly. Cheese flew up to Cosmo and hugged her. They both rubbed faces and laughed, including Cream.

"I think Cheese is grateful to you too Cosmo." said Cream.

Cheese nodded at Cream.

"Well you're very welcome too." said Cosmo "I'm so happy you Chao are free and happy again."

"I'm happy too Cosmo." said Cream as they watched the happy Chao dancing for joy "I'm happy too…"

Footnotes:

***See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 21 for Marik's shocking debut and sinister plan**

Well...Cream and Cosmo didn't do bad on their own did they? Marik will be ruing this day for the rest of his life! And it gets worse for the Martian from there as in the next Tales from

Mobius Arc, we get a look at his life in prison which is certainly no bowl of cherries for him! Reviews are welcome

Also don't miss the next chapter (Chapter 29) of* Heroes of Mobius *as we get the grand debut of the one and only... ha! Not telling! You'll have to wait and see fellow readers! ;)

Marik the Prisoner 1

Arc 3: Marik the Prisoner

Takes place during Stories 26-34 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: A Life in a Day at a Prison

Marik had no idea how it happened. All he could remember was being caught up in the explosion of his ship and being hurtled into the air and then passing out after hitting the ground. Right now, he was sitting in a police car, in laser cuffs and being driven to presumably, a prison station. Marik remained sitting in his seat, frowning so hard he was giving himself a headache and wondering what a prison cell on Mobius looked like. The policemen in the car where Melchett the Hedgehog, who was driving the car, and his goofy sidekick Big Dave the Gopher was in the passenger's seat and laughing like an idiot. Marik glared out of the window and watched the scenery whiz past him as the hover car whizzed down the road, wondering where the heck he was. The police car had just left Green Hill Zone and was now going through the under construction Mobotropolis. Marik remembered that city so well, he had tried to ransack its castle on his first day on this planet* and that infernal hedgehog Sonic had ruined everything for him. He even remembered Castle Acorn, standing there proud and majestic over the city, the very place he tried to take over. He had killed the king and queen and attempted to kill Princess Sally but he had somehow failed to kill Sally and Sonic and friends had ruined everything for him. Mobotropolis was not where Marik was staying though since the city was being rebuilt from Eggman's total levelling of the city on his first time here** so there wouldn't be a police station there. Melchett continued driving on and Marik watched despairingly as Castle Acorn vanished from view.

A short while later, Melchett arrived in Empire City, the fourth largest city on Mobius and the current residence of any citizen from Mobotropolis. There was an MPD (Mobian Police Department)

station here and that's exactly where Marik would be staying from now on. Melchett pulled up in the car park and turned the ignition off. The hover car lowered down and rested on the ground and the two officers got out of the car. Melchett opened the back door and yanked Marik roughly out of the car. The Martian remained tight lipped and furious as Melchett roughly dragged him by the collar of his jacket and hauled him to the station.

"I'm so glad I've managed to arrest you Martian boy!" snarled Melchett "No one kills any member of the Royal Family and gets away with it, not while I'm around!"

Marik just ignored the arrogant cop and remained silent. This was probably the most humiliating thing that had ever happened to him, getting arrested on a planet with species so much weaker then his own and thrown in a prison cell that was probably nowhere near as good as the cells back on Mars. Not to mention he got beaten by an overly polite rabbit named Cream and the biggest thorn in his side since the war with the Seedrians started, Cosmo, a pacifist who couldn't fight to save her life. Losing to those two was a big enough wound on the Martian's pride as it is but being thrown in a prison cell on another world was just rubbing salt into the wound.

Curse that filthy stinking Seedrian and that annoying, loud mouthed bunny! thought Marik bitterly as he was dragged into the MPD station *Once I escape from this primitive station I shall make sure their deaths are too horrible to put into words!*

Melchett dragged Marik up to the counter where an officer was sitting at and writing things in a notepad. His name was General Chipper and he was a chipmunk who despised working with Melchett due to his stubborn and unkind nature and wished he was working with a better cop. Chipper looked up from his notepad and his eyes widened to the size of a baseball.

"Great acorns above! It's that alien freak who murdered the king and queen the other day!" gasped the General.

"Look you lump heads! I have a name you know now use it!" snapped Marik.

"We don't know what your name is scum-face!" snarled Melchett, giving Marik's arm a sharp twist in an attempt to hurt him "So we can't use it!"

"I guess you cops haven't heard everything about me then." muttered Marik "My name is Marik the Martian and arresting me will be the one thing you'll live to regret I promise you!"

"More like coming to our planet and trying to ransack the kingdom will be the one thing YOU will live to regret you scoundrel!" retorted Melchett, giving Marik's arm another sharp twist "I am going to make your life a living hell in here and then you'll be wishing you were back on your own planet instead of here suffering badly."

"Go ahead, hit me with your worst hog-face." dared Marik "I can take the pain."

"Oooooh! Taking chances are you?" said General Chipper crossly.

He got up from the counter and marched over to Marik with his baton in hand. He patted his other hand with the baton threateningly and glared at Marik. Marik just gave him an "Am I supposed to be scared?" expression.

"I think me and you should beat him Melchett!" said Chipper "Let's put this psychopath in his place shall we?"

"With pleasure general." said Melchett with a sadistic grin on his face.

Marik was powerless to do anything since his arms were cuffed behind his back so all he could do was stand there and wait for the beating to begin. General Chipper pushed Marik sharply onto the floor and then he and Melchett began to beat him with their thick, hard batons. They cracked him all over his back and then his legs. Marik was made of strong stuff though so he just took the pain but it did make him insanely angry to be beaten up by a bunch of mere cops with primitive batons. Melchett gave Marik a sharp whack around the back of his head and Marik cried out in pain. Then General Chipper turned Marik onto his back and whacked him in the stomach. Marik coughed and spluttered after that sharp whack but

he still remained unhurt. Melchett and Chipper didn't seem too pleased at the fact their brutal beating didn't seem to have hurt Marik much.

"Tough boy isn't he?" asked Melchett "He wasn't kidding when he said he could take the pain."

"I think I should do some research on this guy." said General Chipper "See what these Martian guys are really like. Good thing I have just the right thing now."

He went back behind the counter and pulled a book out from a shelf under the counter. The book was entitled "The owner's guide to the universe." and it contained files on every alien species and planet in the galaxy. General Chipper searched through the book, flicking the pages by at a great speed, until he found the page he was looking for.

"Ah, Martians." said General Chipper. He read the pages aloud "Martians are highly sadistic, ruthless, peace-hating, violence loving monsters that love to destroy peace and turn planets into war zones. They spend all their lives wrecking planets and fighting other beings or each other just for fun. Due to how much they spend training and fighting, they have strong muscles and bodies, making it hard to hurt them and even harder to bring down in a fight."

"Whoever wrote that book must know us very well." said Marik with a smile "Because that's me to a T. Sonic and five of his friends weren't enough to defeat me!"

"Wipe that prideful smile off your face you miserable midget!" snarled Melchett "Thanks for the information General Chipper, we shall rethink our methods and hopefully, find a way of seriously hurting him."

"Happy to help Melchett." said General Chipper, putting the book away "It's a good thing I brought that book isn't it? I always had a feeling we'd have a prisoner from another world so I brought that book to give us an idea on how to handle the foreign prisoner."

"And I defiantly know how to handle a peace hating sadist." said

Melchett, grinning like a wicked wizard.

Marik just scowled at him. *You have no idea how to handle me!* he thought bitterly.

"Let's take him for a haircut shall we?" said Melchett "That'll hurt him a lot won't it?"

"In case you haven't noticed, I don't have hair!" spat Marik "Why would I need a haircut?"

"Just to hurt you." said Melchett "Hair or no hair, it'll be painful all the same. Let's go to the hair-dresser shall we?"

And with that, Melchett dragged Marik through a door and down a corridor. Marik just scowled even more. He scowled so much his face was practically laden with wrinkles from his angry face. He knew he was not going to enjoy his time here at all…

Before Marik even knew what had happened, he found himself strapped in a chair and an inmate stood behind him with some hair clippers in his hand and itching to use them. Marik could tell this by the occasional excited shake of the inmate's hand. The inmate was a weasel and he had biceps as big as grapefruits and a beastly temper. Marik could see why this inmate was picked to give people painful haircuts, because he had the temper and roughness for it. Marik just remained sat in the chair with his eyes half closed and scowling. Melchett stood by the door, watching with a nasty grin on his face.

"OK Gordon, you may remove the Martian's helmet now." said Melchett.

"Whatever officer." muttered Gordon.

"You will not touch my prized possession you walking waste of flesh and bone!" snarled Marik "If you touch my helmet, I will rip your face off and stuff it down your throat!"

Gordon ignored the ranting Martian and he yanked the three spiked

golden helmet off Marik's head and put it on the counter nearby. What he saw after taking Marik's helmet off was a peculiar sight for the imprisoned weasel. Marik's cranium was full of tiny, round bony lumps no bigger then an ant that spread to the back end of his head. It was like Marik's cranium was covered in tiny pebbles. And like his helmet, he had three spikes on his head, all dull grey in colour. This is why Martians wore helmets or some other kind of headwear; they hate the look of their craniums so they cover them to save themselves the embarrassment of having their enemies see them. Marik went red with anger at the fact everybody in the room could see his horrible cranium. Melchett was rather surprised at what Marik's head looked like without his helmet on but he dismissed it.

"Go on Gordon, give him the treatment." ordered Melchett.

Gordon obeyed and he turned the hair clippers on. The hair clippers buzzed louder then a million bees and Gordon ran it slowly but roughly across Marik's cranium. It isn't easy to hurt a Martian but their craniums are rather sensitive and roughly running hair clippers up and down their craniums hurts ever so much. The hairdresser room was full from top to bottom with Marik screaming at the top of his voice as if someone was scolding him with a red hot iron. Never before had Marik experienced such pain. Even crippling his hand on a rock and Cosmo kicking him in the groin didn't hurt him as much as the hair clippers being roughly run up and down on his sensitive cranium. Melchett smiled to himself as if he was getting great pleasure in watching his new prisoner get hurt like that. That's why he brought Marik here, to let the hairdresser hurt him and show him who's boss in this prison station. After ten whole minutes of the worst pain he'd ever felt in his life, Gordon stopped running the hair clippers on Marik's head and he switched the hair clippers off, the loud buzzing fading into silence. Marik breathed heavily. All that pain had just made him even angrier and more determined for revenge on Cosmo and Cream for getting him in here. Gordon un-strapped Marik from the chair, slammed his helmet back onto his head and pushed him roughly towards Melchett. Melchett grabbed Marik by the arms and glared at him with an evil smile.

"How did you like that Martian boy?" he sneered.

"Hurt me all you want cop!" growled Marik "All you're going to do is

make me mad and more determined to get out of here so you're just making a big mistake!"

"The only mistake around here is the one you've made." said Melchett "The mistake of thinking you can kill the royals and get away with it. Now come on, it's time to take you to your cell and as luck would have it, there's one empty for you."

"Aren't I the lucky one?" said Marik sarcastically.

"Thank you for your services Gordon." said Melchett "Now get back to your cell."

"Whatever officer." said Gordon, stalking out of the room.

The moment Gordon left; Melchett dragged Marik out of the room and led him to the cell blockade.

The cell blockade was where the prisoners were kept. They were kept in small cells that only had a bed and they had glass doors instead of barred doors like traditional cells. Marik was impressed to see the prison cells on Mobius were a lot better then other prison cells he'd seen on other planets. A lot of mean, horrible, ugly, frightening looking inmates glared at the new prisoner that had been dragged into their territory and they looked happy to see they had someone to punch.

"Oooh look at that will you?" said a cellmate who was a warthog with ferocious looking tusks and he had a thick Brooklyn accent.

"Frrrresh meat to soften our knuckles on!" said another inmate who was a purple bat with a stereotypical Transylvanian accent and a habit of rolling his R's "How wunderful!"

"Can't wait to see you at exercise time shrimp!" said another inmate who was a bulldog with a throaty, gravely voice and a lot of scars on his arms.

Marik ignored their horrible comments and insults.

"Be quiet you bunch of stooges!" bellowed Melchett "You're supposed to make the prisoner feel welcome, not like he's with a bunch of bullies!"

"They could treat me like royalty and I wouldn't feel welcome here." muttered Marik "So they can be as horrible as they wish."

Melchett ignored him and he came to a stop to a cell that was next door to a cell containing a brown and white falcon with trimmed wings and a devious scowl on his face as if he was waiting to come in for the kill. Melchett opened the door and dragged Marik into the cell. The cell was just as dank and dusky as the others with a ragged old bed and it was very cold in there due to the fact there as a draft coming in from a tiny hole in the wall that was only big enough to prod a finger through. Marik began to shiver. He was not pleased to have a cold cell as his cell but he had to live with it since he was going to be here for a while.

"This is where you'll be staying Marik." said Melchett "I hope you'll be comfortable in here. Although I don't think you will be since I've told General Chipper to put a mattress of rocks in your bed. I wouldn't be too surprised if you suddenly got rheumatism from sleeping on a bed of rocks."

Marik remained silent, he wrapped his arms around himself and shivered from the chilling draft that drifted around the cell.

"Oh dear, is poor Marik cold?" sneered Melchett "Don't worry, I have just the thing for you."

He leaned out of the cell and called to General Chipper who was at the other end of the blockade giving uniforms to new cellmates.

"Hey Chipper! Do you have a uniform to spare at all?" called Melchett.

"Sure do Melchett!" General Chipper called back.

He ran over to Melchett and handed him a prison uniform. Melchett turned back to Marik and tossed the uniform in the Martian's face. Marik yanked the uniform off his face and glared at it. It was an

orange jumpsuit with an ID tag on it and brown patches on the elbows and knees. Marik stared at the jumpsuit in disgust.

"Put it on." ordered Melchett dryly "Now."

He pulled his pistol out and pointed it sideways at Marik to make sure Marik wouldn't try anything. Marik scowled at Melchett and he slipped the uniform on over his glorious leather jacket. After he'd finally gotten into the uniform, he pulled a horrible face. He looked ridiculous in the jumpsuit and he was not pleased to be wearing it. Plus, it didn't make him feel any warmer, he still felt cold in this cell. Melchett laughed at him.

"Boy you look ridiculous!" he sniggered "Just like the other filthy criminals of this prison! Oh well, have a nice day Marik." he said cheerily as he walked out of the cell and whistled to himself.

The door closed behind him. Marik was trapped in this horrible, dark, cold cell. Marik had had enough of the horrible uniform. He gripped the uniform in his fingers and he ripped the thing off himself and threw it on the floor. The uniform lay in shreds on the floor and Marik stomped on it. Then he reached into his pocket and pulled out a long, thin piece of folded material. He unfolded the material, which was actually a long ragged, flowing robe that he wore on his shoulders. The robe covered his body but his legs were still visible. Martians had robes with them in case they were on a cold planet and Marik definitely needed it now since his cell was so cold. Not to mention he wouldn't look like a lowly prisoner unlike everybody else, he'd stand out from the rest and look strong and prideful at the most. Now Marik had the robe on, he was nice and warm and no longer shivering.

"Aaaah, this is much better." he said to himself "Much better then that orange piece of filth they call clothes!"

He spat on the shreds of orange jumpsuit that lay on the floor at his feet. Now Marik was warm, he could see to getting out of here. He swiped his arms at the cell door and sent an energy wave flying into it. But the energy wave did no harm of any kind to the cell door. In fact, it didn't even dent it or scratch it! Marik couldn't believe it. That was one tough door! Marik tried the back wall instead. He sent an

energy wave flying at the wall but the wall was too strong for his attack and the wave bounced harmlessly off the wall. The walls were steel and not rock unlike the floor and Marik could not break through metal substances with his energy waves. Marik slumped against the wall and growled like an angry dog.

"Oh the indignity!" he moaned "I'm stuck in a cell with no means of escape! Can my time on this planet get any worse? Once I escape from here, I'll make sure Sonic and his friends will pay ever so dearly for all this indignity they've ever caused me!"

All Marik could do now, was try to find a way to escape. Until then, he would have to get accustomed to prison life and that was not what he wanted to do at all. He dreaded to think on what was going to happen next as he rubbed his cranium, still sore from the hair cut episode earlier.

A few minutes very slowly ticked by (Well what do you expect in a prison cell? There's nothing to do in a prison cell so time ticks slowly by) before it was time for the prisoners to go into the exercise yard. The inmates all lined up in single file and were led by General Chipper out of the cell blockade and onto the yard. The exercise yard was a large, open area blocked off with tall fences with barbed wire all over the top of it. There were basketball hoops for those playing basketball and nothing more. Marik hadn't been in the yard for more then a second and already he hated it there. He eyed the walls that fenced him off from freedom. He could just imagine himself climbing up the wall and hoping over it to freedom but he had a few problems. Tight security, a lot of witnesses so someone would notice him escaping and tell on him and his jet shoes were damaged from the explosion so he couldn't fly over the walls, much to his dismay. Once everybody was on the yard, they all lined up in a row and General Chipper came by with a checklist to make sure everybody was there.

"Harold?" he said, coming up to a lion with a trimmed mane and a hideous scowl on his face.

"Here." said the lion known as Harold.

"Scourge?" said General Chipper, coming across a green hedgehog who looked remarkably like Sonic the Hedgehog only with different foot wear, green fur and blue eyes.

"Here." muttered Scourge.

"Marik?" said General Chipper, coming across Marik who just stood there with his hands on his pockets.

Marik didn't answer him, he remained silent. General Chipper looked up from his checklist and saw Marik was there. Then he saw Marik's robe and glared at him.

"What on Mobius are you wearing?" he said crossly.

"Real clothing if you MUST know you insolent waste of flesh!" retorted Marik "I refuse to look like this bunch of morons in their ludicrous orange jumpsuits so I'm wearing this and you can't make me wear anything else!"

The inmates all shifted their glares to the Martian standing in line with them. General Chipper marched up to Marik and grabbed his robe.

"You take that off and put on a prison uniform or I'll rip that robe off!" ordered the General.

Marik grabbed General Chipper's arm with his metal hand, squeezed it and twisted it to the side, causing the chipmunk to yelp.

"You will let me wear what I want or I'll break your arm off and beat you round the head with it!" snarled Marik "And that's a promise!"

The inmates murmured to each other. It's not often that an inmate dared to stand up to a police officer before. Maybe Marik wasn't so bad after all. Marik let go of General Chipper and bared his teeth. Even though his voltage compactor was broken, he managed to get some electricity to crackle between his metal fingers in an attempt to scare the cop. The chipmunk didn't want to lose his arm so he stepped back from Marik timidly. After that frightening episode, the general decided he was going to stay away from Marik from now on.

"O…OK…." said the worried general "I'll let…you keep that…robe… on. Sorry I…protested…um…you may start exercising now everybody." he added quickly, running to his station as fast as he could.

With that said, the inmates all spread out across the exercise yard to do their daily exercise. Some sat near the walls and played a game of cards, some played basketball and some just gathered around and chatted. Marik watched them all with a grim expression. He did not feel like doing anything in this yard, he felt like standing there and doing nothing. Then somebody pushed him from behind and he fell onto the floor. Marik felt a foot being pressed on his back. He turned around and saw that it was none other then Scourge the Hedgehog standing before him with his foot on the Martian's back and glowering at him.

"Hey chump!" he growled in his raspy tough man voice "That was tough stuff you just did back there. No one has ever stood up to General Chipper before."

"I'm amazed." said Marik "General Chipper can't possibly be that intimidating to all you tough looking inmates."

"He doesn't scare me." said Scourge "And I don't buy your tough act at all alien boy. You look like another pretentious little jerk who thinks he's tougher and more important then everybody else. Well guess what? You ain't! I'm the toughest around here and I won't have you challenging my authority and toughness!"

"Pretentious? Jerk? Thinks I'm tougher and more important then everybody else?" repeated Marik "And I'm buying this from some jerk who looks like Sonic the Hedgehog? I think YOU'RE the pretentious one Scourge the Hedgehog not me!"

Scourge stomped on Marik's back good and hard. Marik didn't feel much pain though.

"I AM NOT PRETENTIOUS!" he bellowed "And the only reason I look like Sonic is because I'm his brother! The only difference is I'm much better looking and much stronger then that wuss bag. He got me in here two years ago when he denied me what's mine, which is

total domination of this world and I want to spin-dash him into a pulp when I get outta here!"

Marik was intrigued with this. Sonic has an evil brother? Maybe he could make an alliance with the green hedgehog and break out of prison. Then he and Scourge could both destroy Sonic together and wreck Mobius forever. Scourge lifted his foot off Marik and Marik got back to his feet. He dusted himself off and pulled Scourge close to himself.

"Well Scourge, that's interesting. You hate Sonic?" whispered Marik "I hate him too. Me and you have something in common here so I have an idea."

Scourge listened on.

"Me and you could team up and break out of this prison and destroy Sonic together." said Marik "My strength and your abilities are bound to destroy that insolent hedgehog and once we destroy Sonic, we can rule Mobius together and everybody will bow down to us! What do you say?"

Scourge just gave Marik a terrific uppercut to the chin. Marik flew through the air and landed on his back, catching the attention of some inmates.

"No deal chump from space!" growled Scourge "I wanna rule Mobius by myself, I am not sharing power with anyone else, especially you! I will destroy Sonic myself; Mobius will be MY kingdom with MY rules and MY punishments! You will be a snivelling servant grovelling ay my feet when I conquer the world alien boy!"

Marik got to his feet and leapt at Scourge, snarling wildly.

"I'll make you sorry for that you egotistical snot-faced worm!" he roared.

Scourge dodged Marik's attack and let the Martian crash into the ground and get a mouthful of dirt. Two huge inmates stood over the Martian with evil scowls on their faces. One was an ox with giant horns and enormous muscles, the other was a rhino with three

horns, one large one and two smaller ones and spiked wristbands on his wrists. They cupped their hands around their fists and snorted at him.

"Hey Scourge, is this guy bothering you buddy?" said the ox gruffly.

"Yes he is." said Scourge "Do me a favour and put him in his place will you?"

The ox and rhino obeyed and they began to shower Marik with punches that felt like fists of steel to the poor Martian. They punched Marik all over his back, in his face and in his stomach and every single punch hurt. Marik had never felt punches as hard as this in his life and all he could wonder is how did those two ever get so strong. The rhino punched him in the eye. Marik fell onto his bottom and he rubbed his throbbing eye. It had swollen up and become purple in colour. Then to finish it all off, Scourge spin-dashed Marik and sent the Martian hurling through the air and crashing into a basketball post. Some inmates playing basketball glared at him.

"Oy! We're playing here shrimp!" snarled an inmate who was a female ferret with little tolerance for people getting in her way.

"Let's use HIM as the ball shall we Stella?" asked another female inmate who was a bear and considerably larger then the ferret and she had muscles to show how tough she was.

"Good idea Loretta." said Stella, seizing Marik by the collar and throwing him at Loretta.

Loretta held Marik firmly by his head and then she threw him straight into the hoop. Marik's head was too big for the hoop though so he ended up getting stuck in it. He was stuck, upside down, in the basket ball hoop by his head. His legs waggled feebly in the air and Stella and Loretta laughed at him.

"You ruffians get me down this minute or I'll make rock paste out of you!" yelled Marik, flinging his arms out madly.

Scourge leaped into the air and spin-dashed the basketball hoop. The hoop wobbled furiously and Marik was shaken out of it. He fell

from the hoop's great height and landed sharply on his back. He felt his spine crack in several places as he made sharp contact with the ground. Marik felt terrible right now. He'd had a hard beating from Scourge and two inmates and now he'd been used as a basketball. He was more determined then ever to escape this horrible place now. Scourge and the ox and rhino stood over Marik, all with evil glares and smiles on their faces. Stella and Loretta joined in too.

"You see shrimp." said Scourge "I'm the head man here. Everybody loves me here and everybody does what I say. You will have to get used to my way of handling things here or I'll make sure you get an even bigger beating next time. Now stay in line and know your place!"

Marik just growled at Scourge and swiped his arms at him, knocking the hedgehog off his feet with an energy wave.

"I will not stay in line!" yelled Marik "And my place is not in here! I will not succumb to your rules and limits so easily! It's going to take more then that to break me you know!"

"Right! That is it! Get him inmates!" ordered Scourge.

The ox and rhino and Stella and Loretta leaped on Marik. Marik dodged their leaps and ran for it as fast as he could. He was not having another beating this time. As he ran for his life from the inmates, who were chasing after him, he trampled through a deck full of cards that four inmates were playing with. The cards were sent scattering everywhere and the inmates were furious. They got to their feet and joined in the chase. Marik looked over his shoulder to see Scourge and the inmates chasing him. Even though Marik's jet shoes had been damaged, he could still use them to go fast. He activated them and picked up speed. But Scourge could run the same speed as Sonic so he could easily catch up with Marik. Scourge picked up speed and ran after Marik. Marik looked over his shoulder to see Scourge catching him up. But he should have kept his eye on what was ahead of him because he was running towards a wall. Marik crashed straight into it with an enormous crash. That crash was so hard and painful, he felt like he'd just smashed his face to pieces. Marik turned around and saw that he was now trapped between the wall and Scourge and the inmates. Marik just

remained where he was and awaited his punishment. The inmates all let loose on Marik. They punched him, they kicked him, they walloped him, they pushed him, they did all sorts of horrible things to the Martian. Then Loretta picked Marik up and tossed him into the air like a rugby ball. Stella caught him and tossed him to Scourge. Scourge punched him into the ox and the ox threw him to the rhino. The rhino threw him to a card playing inmate and the tossing continued on and on after that. Marik began to feel a little nauseous after all that tossing around he had began going through. Finally the throwing around stopped and the ox threw Marik into the ground like a rugby ball being thrown down in a touchdown. Marik scrapped across the ground and ended up with a face full of dirt. Marik sighed and groaned loudly and the inmates all laughed at him.

"Come on guys and gals." said Scourge "We've got better things to do then tussle with a loser like him there."

And with that, the inmates all walked away, laughing like hyena. Marik lay there with his face in the dirt, not knowing which part of him to rub better. His body felt like his entire skeleton had broken and he felt lame and weak. Too weak to get back up. Plus his stomach felt queasy from all that throwing about. Never, ever in his life had he suffered such punishment. He never knew Mobians could punch that hard. And all that punishment he'd just suffered made him more determined then ever to escape and kill Cosmo and Cream as well as Sonic the Hedgehog. It was all their fault he was here, suffering such torment from the wrath of Scourge and his cronies behind prison walls. He couldn't wait to escape. The only problem was, he had no idea on how to escape. As Marik lay there, feeling miserable and beaten, Scourge and his gang of inmates began playing basketball. Marik lifted his face out of the mound of dirt and scowled at the green hedgehog. He had the sudden urge to kill Scourge now but he knew he was powerless against him and his inmate gang so he decided to make himself scarce for the rest of the time out in the yard. No other inmate seemed interested in beating Marik up right now, they were too busy doing their own thing or beating up the weaker inmates. Marik picked himself up and wondered over to a bench attached to the wall and sat on it. He decided he was going to stay there until recreation time was over and it was time to go back to his cell. He'd be much safer in his own

cell then out in the yard with a bunch of thugs. Any inmate passing by the bench Marik sat on either ignored him or shot a death glare at him. Marik just ignored them all and entered a train of thoughts. He was thinking about war with the Seedrians currently going on and what was happening there. He thought about how much fun he'd had being part of the war and how much fun he had blowing things to pieces.

"If only I stayed put instead of chasing the Seedrian children." muttered Marik "I wouldn't be here right now, I'd be in a glorious war killing Seedrians and blowing their planet to pieces. Now I'm here, in a prison cell full of thugs and a jerk who looks like Sonic. I used to be a great soldier in a raging war, now I'm a joke behind bars and used as a punching bag. Oh the humiliation!"

"Quit talking to yerself you weirdo!" shouted the Brooklyn accented warthog whom Marik had seen earlier, smacking Marik on the head.

Marik didn't even feel that smack due to his hard helmet protecting him. Then suddenly, an alarm blared through a megaphone attached to a wall and the voice of Melchett the Hedgehog rang out through the megaphone.

"Attention inmates, recreation time is over. The hour is 5:00pm meaning its dinner time. Line up at the station before you go to the canteen."

Marik stood up from his bench and joined the inmates as they lined up. The inmates all lined up and General Chipper checked them off again before they went back inside. Everybody was here again, there was nobody missing much to the delight of General Chipper. Now the inmates had been checked off, General Chipper led them inside the MPD station and escorted everybody to the canteen. The canteen was full of tables and benches and stalls of food that the inmates would go up and get. The food was served on trays and once the inmates got their required food and drink, they would sit at a table and eat it. Marik was not interested in what food was on offer but he had to eat something or he would starve. Maybe food on Mobius wouldn't be bad, maybe it might taste as good as food on Mars. Marik grabbed a tray and went up to the counter. The chef stared at him as Marik came up to him.

"I have no idea what you Mobians eat so just serve me whatever you like." said Marik "I don't care what it is just, make sure it tastes nice."

The chef nodded and dumped a big lump of mashed potatoes on Marik's tray. The steaming hot mash looked disgusting to Marik but he didn't care. Then the chef dumped a portion of vegetables on his tray. Marik carried the tray away and filled himself a cup of plain old water from a water machine. Then Marik took his meal to the table and sat down. He was not looking forward to eating it but he didn't want to starve so he picked up his fork, plunged it into the mash and shoved it in his mouth. His eyes widened and he gagged. The mash tasted HORRIBLE! It was the most disgusting thing he had ever eaten in his entire life! The mash was so horrible Marik had a horrible coughing fit. All the inmates looked up at Marik. After Marik had finished coughing and spluttering he began to rant angrily.

"What the bloody hell are you trying to do! Poison me?" he bellowed at the top of his voice, not really caring everybody was watching him. "That revolting pile of sludge does not deserve to be labelled as "food" at all! It tastes like something that comes out your bottom!"

Unfortunately for Marik, Scourge the Hedgehog and his cronies were just sitting down to eat their meals and they had stood there and watched Marik throw a fit. Scourge saw the opportunity to torment Marik again.

"Hey shrimp!" called Scourge "Enjoying your meal?"

"You shut up you overbearing Sonic clone!" snarled Marik "I haven't got time for your insolence right now!"

Scourge resisted the urge to tear Marik apart limb from limb. He snapped his fingers which to the ox and rhino who were with him, was an order to attack. The rhino stomped over to Marik, grabbed him by the head and slammed it straight into the mash potato on his tray.

"Hey shrimp! How does that taste?" asked the ox mockingly as the rhino rubbed Marik's face into the mash "Do you like it? You like it? Does it taste nice? Huh? Huh?"

Marik couldn't answer since his face was being smeared in the mash potato. The rhino finally let him go and Marik began spitting out bits of mash that had made it into his mouth. He grabbed the water cup and gulped the entire thing down in one gulp just to get the horrible taste out of his mouth and he wiped the mash potato off his face. Then, just to get revenge on the rhino, he threw the wiped off mash straight into the rhino's face. The rhino growled and tried to attack him but Marik slashed the rhino across the face with his metal claws and then punched him in the stomach.

"I have had enough of your abuse today!" yelled Marik "It's time I showed you how strong I really am!"

The ox pounced on Marik but Marik reacted first and gave the ox an uppercut that sent him flying into the air and crashing down on an empty table. That made everybody watch the whole scene with interest. Scourge growled at Marik. Marik growled back. The two rivals stared each other down and got into battle ready stances, ready to beat the snot out of each other. Then suddenly, Loretta began to chant.

"Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!" she chanted.

The inmates were thrilled by this and they began joining in with the chanting.

"Fight! Fight! Fight!" chanted everybody in the room.

That did it. Marik and Scourge lunged at each other and they tackled each other to the ground. Marik pinned Scourge down onto the ground and began to shower the green hedgehog with heavy punches. His metal hand gave the hardest punches due to how hard the metal was. Scourge grabbed Marik's arms just as Marik tried to plunge his claws into the green hedgehog's throat. The two began to grapple with each other, growling furiously.

"Hey Loretta! Fifty Mobiums says Shrimp beats Scourge!" betted Stella, who was enjoying the fight so far.

"Double on Scourge." said Loretta "No one can beat him."

Scourge and Marik continued grappling with each other furiously. Scourge tried to push Marik off himself but Marik was too strong. Scourge was secretly impressed at what Marik had been putting up so far. If HE was having trouble with the Martian then he could almost imagine Marik fighting Sonic and mashing him to pieces. Unfortunately, before the fight could continue or come to a close, Melchett, Big Dave and General Chipper burst into the canteen and ran up to the brawling hedgehog and Martian. Big Dave, being a strong cop, effortlessly hauled Marik off Scourge and General Chipper blasted him in the neck with a quick shock from a taser. Marik yelped loudly as the taser painfully shocked him and the Martian fell into silence. Melchett roughly hauled Scourge onto his feet and gritted his teeth at him.

"What happened Scourge?" demanded Melchett fiercely "Suppose you decided to start another fight huh?"

"No Melchett!" retorted Scourge "Shrimp boy here started it! He attacked my cronies…uh I mean friends, for no reason and then decided to attack me!"

"I did not start this fight at all!" roared Marik "You started this by not letting me have my peace!"

"You! Be quiet!" snarled General Chipper "Or I'll taser you full blast and you won't like it!"

"Big Dave, take that dirty little scab back to his cell since he can't play nicely with the others." ordered Melchett "And don't let him out until lunch time tomorrow afternoon!"

"Yes sir." said Big Dave dopily.

"Um…I'll go with him just to make sure Big Dave doesn't do something stupid." said General Chipper, remembering an unfortunate event that happened the last time Big Dave had to escort someone back to their cell.

The prisoner had violently attacked Big Dave due to him stupidly letting go and ran for it, only to be caught be Melchett and General Chipper did not want a repeat of that so he went with Big Dave as

he pulled Marik out of the canteen and dragged him down the corridor to the cell blockade. Marik made no attempt to get free from Big Dave's grasp since he knew Chipper would just taser him again. As for Melchett, he just stayed behind and tidied up the mess that Marik had made in the canteen. He groaned loudly at the very sight of the broken table and the spilled trays of food. Scourge smirked to himself triumphantly. He had gotten Marik in trouble and he'd gotten away with it. Now that Martian would finally know his place and would not dear to stand up to him again.

Big Dave and Chipper had dragged Marik to the dark, empty cell blockade and they threw the Martian into the cold, dark cell. Marik scraped across the floor painfully and scowled angrily to himself.

"That'll teach you to senselessly attack inmates unprovoked!" growled Chipper "And you'd better apply to the prison rules or I'll give you worse then I've already have!"

He slammed his hand on the control pad outside the cell and the glass door slid down with a thud, trapping Marik inside. The two policemen walked away to get their dinners, leaving Marik alone in his cell. Marik picked himself up and wondered over to the bed. He felt the mattress and just as Melchett had said to him earlier, the mattress was full of rocks. Marik moaned and sat down on the floor. There was no way he was sleeping on a mattress full of rocks, he would rather sleep on the cold, damp floor and since he had his robe on, he would be nice and warm at least. Marik lay down on the floor on his side and mumbled miserably to himself.

"I never imagined prison life being this horrible!" he grumbled "I know our prisoners don't exactly like the treatment we give them back on Mars but I never knew prison life could be this bad. I don't think even dad gives prisoners treatments this harsh! He just gasses them to death and it's all over in a jiffy! On here, inmates have to suffer from excessive bullying and food fights! Oooooh Mobius is such an uncivilized planet and I'm definitely looking forward to finally destroying it once and for all! And I'm going to start with this place!"

All that would have to wait though, he needed to escape the prison

first and he had no idea on how he was going to do it at the moment. For now he had to grit his teeth and bear the life of an inmate until he had the perfect plan to escape…

That night, everything was silent and all the inmates of the prison were peacefully snoozing away in their cells. Even Marik had somehow managed to fall asleep, even though he wasn't even sleeping on a nice warm bed. As Marik slept the hours away, he began to dream.

He was dreaming a wonderful dream about him being back on the Seedrian home world and destroying oncoming advances from the Seedrian army with his ferocious parents and wicked uncle. He blasted several Seedrians to bits with his disintegrating rifle and fired a missile at an oncoming wheeled cannon. Watching all this destruction and mayhem going on made Marik laugh with joy. In fact Marik was so caught up in his dream, he was actually laughing in his sleep!

Then suddenly his dream was interrupted by a loud blaring sound that blared all throughout the entire MPD station and woke everybody up. Marik jolted awake and sat up. What was going on? He sat next to the door and watched, wondering what was happening. Then a green blur ran straight past his cell. Several police officers ran after him. It was Scourge the Hedgehog! He had escaped from his cell, ripped off his prison uniform and he was running down the blockade and to freedom. The alarm stopped blaring and everything fell into silence. Marik waited for a few minutes before hearing the sound of Melchett's voice from further up the blockade.

"Damn it!" he cursed "I can't believe it! Scourge the Hedgehog, our number one prisoner has escaped! How did this happen?"

"A witness claims to have seen Scourge knock an officer out just as he was escorting him to his cell and then the green menace ran for it." said General Chipper "He killed about twenty police officers with that Sonic Tornado of his."

"Oooh woe is me!" moaned Melchett "How did I let this happen? Scourge should not have been able to escape! He hasn't attempted for all the time he's been here so how did he manage now?"

"Maybe he decided to play it nice until the time was right and then executed his plan." said General Chipper "Scourge must have been really patient to wait so long before attempting to escape."

Marik had overheard the entire conversation and had mixed feelings about the whole thing. Now Scourge had escaped, he was gone for good and he couldn't pick on him anymore. But Marik was wishing that had been him escaping instead of Scourge. He lay back down on the floor and drifted back off to sleep.

You may have escaped Scourge but don't think you're safe from me now! he thought in his sleep *Because I'll be joining you shortly!*

Marik was now more determined then ever to escape the prison and get revenge on the ones he hated more then anything in the universe…

Footnotes:

***See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 21**

**** See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 2**

See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 28 to see what villainous antics Scourge will get up to now he's free!

Life in prison really sucks for Marik doesn't it? And it's only going to get worse from here for him... Read and Review.

Marik the Prisoner 2

Arc 3: Marik the Prisoner

Takes place during Stories 26-34 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2: No Better Then The First Day

"I can't believe it! That jerk Scourge the Hedgehog ditched us!" moaned the ox "How could he break out of prison without taking any of us with him?"

"That's Scourge for you." said Stella the Ferret "He deceives people and then leaves them in the dirt. He only cares for himself after all and he doesn't want anybody with him. He's so arrogant and big headed he thinks he can do everything himself."

"He escaped the prison all on his own." said an inmate who was a male vulture with trimmed wings to prevent him from flying "So that's one thing in his favour. If he can escape a prison with no assistance then taking over the world will be a walk in the park for him."

"No it won't. Not with that douche bag Sonic the Hedgehog around ruining every bad guy's evil plans." noted Loretta the Bear "Sonic's a tough nut and he's the only one capable of defeating Dr. Eggman so Scourge is gonna have his hands full."

The inmates had all heard about Scourge's escape from prison last night and they were furious about it since he hadn't bothered to help anyone else escape. Marik the Martian paced around the exercise yard, listening to the inmate's conversations and thinking on how nice it was without Scourge around to pick on him and get his cronies to beat him up. In fact, no one seemed bothered about Marik this morning; they were all talking about Scourge's escape. That was one thing Marik was pleased about. The only thing making Marik miserable was the fact he was still in the prison and he wished he was listening to people talking about HIS escape and not Scourge's. Mind you, none of the inmates probably cared about

Marik so they wouldn't care about his breakout. As Marik paced around the yard, the purple bat with the Transylvanian accent and Harold the Lion with the trimmed mane glared at him like an eagle watching its prey from high up in a tree. They decided to have some fun with Marik so they ran up to him and grabbed him by the collar of his robe. Marik immediately lost his temper. Couldn't those stupid inmates leave him alone for one morning?

"I will thank you kindly for not touching my robe you dirty beasts!" snarled Marik "Release me this minute!"

"I don't tink we'll be doing that." hissed the bat menacingly "We vant to have some fun with you Marrrrik the Martian."

"Well I'm not in the mood to play right now bat boy!" retorted Marik "And my name's not "Marrrrik" it's Marik!"

"I know it is you gormless oaf!" snapped the bat "Don't you tink I know your name by know you rrrrufian?"

"Does he always talk like that?" asked Marik.

"Yes he does." said Harold "Is there a problem with that spunky?"

"It just sounds stupid every time he says a word with a heavy emphasis on the "R" letter." said Marik "I mean how many people do you know talk like that?"

Harold then suddenly punched Marik in the face and sent the Martian flying into the ground back first. Marik came to a stop at the bench and table that Stella, Loretta, the ox and the vulture were sitting at. They all peered down at Marik and glared angrily at him as if he had just picked their pockets. Marik glared gloomily up at the people sitting on the bench and glaring at him. He picked himself up and tried to walk away but the bat stopped him.

"Stop rrrright there Martian!" said the bat furiously "I vant to give you a punch for insulting my speech! Now stand still while I give you a grrrreat big uppercut to the chin!"

"Oh what harm can you do you Transylvanian accented moron?" snapped Marik "You're as skinny as a rake, you can't possibly have

big strong muscles!"

"You're not so stocky looking yourself and yet you seem to have strength that's on par with Scourge." noted Harold coldly "So don't judge Vulcan by his appearance you little maggot!"

"You're the maggot lion face!" snapped Marik "Now leave me alone or I'll have to seriously injure you!"

"That's it! Vulcan get him!" ordered Harold angrily.

"With pleasure Harold!" said Vulcan happily.

He charged at Marik and tried to punch him but Marik bent over backwards and dodged the purple bat's punch. Marik then struck him with an enormous head butt to the face. Vulcan felt like he had been hit by a car due to how hard that head butt was. Marik's helmet made it all the more harder and more painful too. While Vulcan was down, Marik grabbed the bat by the arms and pulled on them from behind. He pressed his foot against the bat's back to make his pull on Vulcan's arms even harder. Vulcan yelped a high pitched squeal of a yelp as Marik pulled violently on his arms. Harold ran up to Marik and tried to attack him but Marik kicked Vulcan straight into Harold. Harold stumbled backwards and then Marik leapt into the air and dropkicked the lion in the forehead. Harold fell onto his back and grimaced. He gripped his face and rubbed it very hard. Marik dusted his hands off and glared at the lion and bat that lay defeated on the ground before him.

"Let that be a lesson to you two twerps!" growled Marik "When I request to be left alone, I want to be left alone! Now don't you dare try to beat me up or I'll do worse then before!"

The inmates at the table glared at him.

"Oooh, you think you're a tough guy now?" said the ox, his voice all soft and dangerous sounding "Do you really think that because Scourge is gone that you're in charge?"

"No!" snapped Marik "I just want to be left alone! Is that too much to ask?"

"No one orders us around unless we think you're worthy enough to order us around!" squawked the vulture "I think you need to be taught a lesson you horrible boy!"

"Agreed." said Loretta fiercely, thumping her fists together "I think I'm going to use you as a basket ball again alien dirt!"

And with that the inmates sitting at the table stood up and advanced on Marik. They had their hands open and ready to grab him and they had hideous scowls on their hideous faces. Marik just stood there with his arms folded and watched the inmates coming towards him, scowling at them. The moment the inmates got within two feet of the Martian, he swiped both of his arms and sent an energy wave hurling in the inmate's faces. They were all swept off their feet by the wave and they landed on their backs very painfully. They crashed very painfully against the bench and their heads began to throb furiously. Harold and Vulcan were amazed by that sudden attack from the little robed Martian.

"Grrrreat rrrroaring lions!" gasped Vulcan "That guy's tougher then I thought!"

"I don't think we're safe near him!" squeaked Harold "Let's get out of here before he decides to energy wave us!"

And with that the lion and bat got up to their feet and they ran for their lives. Marik just watched them run away and he stalked off, leaving the defeated inmates lying on the ground groaning in pain. Marik listened to their groans with satisfaction.

"This is the most amusement I'm going to get in here." he muttered to himself "Their groans of pain are very amusing to listen to."

He wondered off across the yard, staring at the ground and thinking horrid thoughts to himself. Any inmate he came across suddenly got scared and ran away from him. They had seen what Marik had just done to the inmates he'd attacked and they didn't want Marik to attack them the same way. Marik smiled to himself. Ever since Scourge had left, the inmates didn't seem bothered about him and they were now afraid of him. After all, only Scourge could stand up to Marik and now he was gone, Marik was supreme once again. But

that didn't mean Marik was enjoying his time in the prison, he still hated it and he still wanted to escape. As he paced around the yard he began thinking on how he can escape the prison. He had taken into account that his shoes were damaged so he couldn't fly over the wall, he couldn't climb up the wall because it was full of barbed wire and it was much to tall for him to climb over. You would have to be six feet tall to reach the top of the wall and Marik was only three feet tall. Maybe he could tunnel under the wall. His sharp metal claws might be a useful digging tool. But he couldn't try tunnelling under the wall in broad daylight since he was bound to get caught. He would have to wait until night time to try and escape. That way the yard would be empty and he wouldn't be disturbed by anybody. Then suddenly, Marik was interrupted by the sound of an announcement by Melchett the Hedgehog, the chief of the police in the MPD station in Empire City. Melchett had just arrived onto the yard and he was announcing something to the inmates of the prison.

"Attention everybody." he boomed to the crowd of inmates in the yard "We have four new prisoners joining us in this prison. I trust you know the drill, when we have new prisoners you keep them in line and make sure they know who's boss here. And especially no tempting them to try and escape!"

He stood to the side and four new inmates marched out from behind and stood in a row. Two of the inmates were jackals and they were twin brothers so they looked completely identical. They were both red in colour with chipped ears, although one jackal had the chip on his left ear and the other jackal and the chip on his right ear, and they were both the same height too. They wore orange jumpsuits like the all the other inmates in the prison and their outfits had nametags so Melchett could tell between the two. Marik snorted at them. He was defiantly looking forward to softening his knuckles on their faces later. The other was a prairie dog with a rather nervous looking expression on his face. He shook slightly, clearly looking terrified at the fact he was here now. He wore a ragged looking prison uniform. It was clear that Melchett had run out of good uniforms so he gave the prairie dog a ragged old one that belonged in a dustbin. Marik snorted again. He didn't look much like a convict; he looked like a nervous wreck. What sort of crime did he commit then? Being a coward in a place where cowards were outlawed?

The final inmate was a female skunk with long flowing white hair, hazel eyes and a thin stripe under her left eye. She wore a prison outfit a little different to the others. Her shirt was tied at the front and it exposed her midriff. It was none other then the nefarious Lola Gunn! She was a bounty hunter with an unhealthy love for money and a twisted fondness of killing people just to get paid. She had been hired by Dr. Eggman to kill Tails when he was spying on him* and her attempts were thwarted by Sonic and Amy. Marik looked approvingly at Lola. She didn't look too bad and she definitely looked like she'd committed a crime or two. Marik even thought Lola looked interesting and he was interested to know what she was here for.

"Here are the inmates' names as follows:" said Melchett "The twin jackals are called Carl and Cody, the prairie dog is called Skittles and the skunk is called Lola Gunn. I'm pretty sure you all know who she is and I hope you give her a very harsh treatment here because this bounty hunter scumbag deserves it! That is all, continue what you were doing."

And with that Melchett left the yard and went back into the station. All the inmates immediately surrounded the jackal brothers and the nervous looking prairie dog. Lola Gunn slipped away from them all. The inmates bore down on the three new arrivals with their fists clenched and big evil smiles on their faces.

"Oooh look!" said Vulcan nastily "We've got new scrrrrubs to beat up! I bet they'll be more fun to beat up then that stupid Martian!"

"I'll say." said Harold "I'm gonna punch the nervous wreck there, I bet it's funny when he screams in pain!"

Skittles looked like he was about to wet himself with fear. Carl and Cody didn't seem that bothered though. It was almost like they were awaiting their punishments and were just standing by waiting for the first blow. Stella, Loretta and the ox immediately cut loose on the jackal brothers and they began to give them painful uppercuts, punches and kicks. Harold and Vulcan attacked Skittles and he howled ever so loudly as he was being attacked. Lola just watched with an unimpressed expression on her face.

"Man! This is why I hate boys." she groaned "Boys are so dim-witted! All muscle and no brain! Why do they love violence so much? I'm so glad I'm a girl, girls are far more brainy and sensible then stupid boys."

She walked away from the fight and then spotted Marik sitting on a bench next to the wall and looking rather glum. Lola recognized him. She often read newspapers in between assignments and she had read about Marik's attempted ransack of Castle Acorn. The story had fascinated her of course and now Marik was sitting there in the same yard as her, now was her chance to meet him and see if he was any better then any boy she had met before. Lola wondered over to the bench and sat down next to Marik. Marik didn't even notice her, he was too busy feeling angry and miserable.

"Hey." said Lola "How's it going for you?"

Marik snapped out of his trance and looked to his right to see Lola Gunn sitting next to him.

"Why do you care?" he muttered "You kill people for money so you shouldn't give a damn about anybody."

"Well I've read all about you in the newspapers I read when I'm not on duty and I was fascinated at your attempts to ransack Castle Acorn." said Lola "I thought you looked interesting and I want to know more about you Marik the Martian."

Marik was impressed. Lola was probably the only Mobian on Mobius who was fascinated by his attempts to take over the kingdom. He knew that he and Lola were probably going to get on just fine in this prison.

"I don't know what to say about that Lola." said Marik "I'm flattered at the fact you found my attempts to take over Castle Acorn fascinating. What's so fascinating about it like?"

"Just the fact that not many people attempt to take over Castle Acorn." said Lola casually "And the Acorn family are the kind of people I would love to shoot since they're a pathetic excuse for a royal family. Their rule over Mobotropolis is appalling; I wish

someone would offer me cold hard cash just to shoot their silly little heads off. Pity you beat me to it by killing the King and Queen but the Princess is still alive so if I ever escape this prison, I might have a chance to shoot her."

Marik had been fascinated with everything Lola said. She was as dark and twisted as he was! Lola was definitely the only Mobian on this planet he was going to like.

"So, how did you get in here then?" asked Marik.

Lola's expression fell into a grim expression of misery as last night's events flooded through her head.

"Last night: Dr. Eggman hired me to kill Sonic the Hedgehog and his twin-tailed fox friend because the fox was spying on him and Sonic is a threat to him." she explained.

"Really?" said Marik, a big smile spread across his face "Did you succeed?"

"No unfortunately." muttered Lola "Sonic and his poorly dressed girl-friend stopped me. I reported my failure to Dr. Eggman and the fat man fired me and tried to get me roboticized." she stopped and shuddered a little before continuing "I just managed to escape the robots and I managed to escape Eggman's city thanks to my great speed and agility. But that's when the bad luck happened." her ears drooped down and her eyes narrowed into a frown "After escaping, I got hit by a car. And to my sheer bad luck, it was a police car! I wasn't hurt badly luckily but that car had taken me out long enough for the driver to arrest me and bring me here. Man I'm so mad I'm here now! I never get caught! How did this happen to me?"

Marik was not pleased to hear that Lola had failed to kill his biggest enemy on Mobius. He was even amazed at how unlucky Lola had been. Just imagine fleeing for your life and then getting hit by a police car while escaping from someone! No one should have luck as bad as that! Ever!

"And that's how I got here." added Lola grimly "How did you get here then Martian boy?"

"After Sonic ruined my attempts at taking over Castle Acorn I began kidnapping Chao so I could use them to make new Energy Diamonds." he said "Energy Diamonds are powerful diamonds native to Mars and we Martians use them to heal ourselves or increase our power momentarily and I lost mine after Sonic defeated me so I needed a new one. My plans were ruined by that infernal Seedrian Cosmo and that stupid bunny rabbit Cream and my ship blew up, sending me flying through the air and crashing onto the ground. I don't know what happened next but I assume a police-car drove up and the police nabbed me while I was knocked out and now I'm here."

He finished his explanation with a very frustrated groaning sigh.

"I hate it here!" he moaned "The inmates beat me up for no reason, the police are needlessly cruel to me and the food is repulsive! I really want to get out of here!"

"I can't say I wanna stay here myself." said Lola "I want to escape too. Maybe me and you could team up and we can both escape this thing together. Those stupid cops can't stop both of us so both of us together are bound to escape this hell hole! What do you say?"

Marik considered for a moment. Having an accomplice aid him in escaping was definitely a good idea since he would escape a whole lot easier. Lola looked like she was good at breaking in and out of things so she would probably find out how to get out of the prison. Marik knew what he was going to do now. He held his hand out for Lola to shake.

"I shall take you up on your offer Lola." said Marik "We shall team up for the breakout. But NO stabbing me in the back or I'll kill you and use your skin as a rug to wipe my feet on!"

"I never stab people in the back." said Lola "Mainly because I never work with anyone, I always play solo on my assignments so I've never had the chance to double-cross anyone."

Marik nodded and then Lola shook his hand.

"Then it's settled." said Marik "We shall find out how to escape this

prison and work together to breakout of it. Once we break out maybe we should work together and get revenge on the people responsible for us being here."

"I like the sound of that." said Lola evilly "I wanna shoot Sonic in the head for making a fool out of me."

"And I've got a long list of people to get revenge on for wrecking my plans and getting me in here." said Marik "I can't wait to slaughter them all!"

The two evil inmates smiled evilly at each other. This was one alliance Marik knew he was going to enjoy and Lola felt the same thing. Maybe working with others wouldn't be so bad after all. Unfortunately, their evil moment was interrupted by the unwelcome arrival of two inmates. One of the inmates was a gerbil with enormous teeth, burning red eyes and cuts on his wrists. The other was a porcupine with long sharp spines protruding from his back and he had a glass eye. They glared down at Marik and Lola and they smiled evilly at them.

"Hey Lola." said the porcupine "Why are you hanging around with Shrimp the Space Loser? You got no one better to hang around with?"

"Oh go away will you?" sighed Lola "Who I hang around with is none of your business spiky."

"Oh come on darling." said the gerbil teasingly "You've got much better guys to hang around with then him! Come with us and you'll see what we mean."

He reached out to grab Lola by the arm and haul her away but Marik grabbed the gerbil by the arm with his metal hand and he squeezed on it as hard as he could. The gerbil began to yelp and squeal as Marik squeezed on his arm.

"Lola has kindly requested to be left alone..." hissed Marik "So leave her alone!"

"OK! OK! I'm sorry! Let go of my arm you demon!" squealed the

gerbil.

Marik didn't let go of his arm. Instead he grabbed the gerbil's arm with his other hand so now he was squeezing it with both hands and then he got up from the bench and dragged the gerbil away. Lola stayed sat on the bench and watched, wondering what Marik was going to do to the gerbil. Marik dragged the gerbil all the way to the centre of the exercise yard and then he proceeded to swing the poor inmate around by his arm! Marik began to spin in a circle whilst holding the gerbil's arm and the gerbil became nothing more then a white and orange blur. All the inmates watched with amazement as the little Martian was swinging the gerbil, who was twice his size, around in a perfect circle with little effort. Even Lola was impressed by this. Marik was by far the only boy she was ever going to like and she knew it. After swinging him around ten times, Marik finally let go of the gerbil and the poor inmate was sent hurling into the air. The gerbil soared through the air like an aeroplane and he ended up diving down towards the wall. The gerbil smiled. If he kept going he would fly over the wall and then he would be free! The gerbil soared closer and closer to the wall and...he landed on the mass of barbed wire and got stuck! The sharp barbs of the wire got caught up in his clothes and the poor gerbil couldn't get free. He accidentally cut himself on some of the barbs and his arms had long thin cuts streaming with blood now. Lola sat there and laughed until her sides hurt whereas the other inmates were completely astounded at what Marik had just done right now. Marik dusted his hands off and smirked at the stuck gerbil.

"Humph, not bad I must say." he said to himself "Considering I'm not in strict training, not bad at all!"

"Marik that was incredible!" cried Lola, getting up off the bench and running over to Marik "How did you do that?"

"Let's just say years worth of combat training really pays off." said Marik snidely "I may not look strong but I am strong. I'm strong enough to hold my own against Sonic and five of his friends at once."

"Really?" said Lola "Then Sonic's got a treat coming his way when you and me escape from here!"

"He has." said Marik "And I look forward to hearing him scream once I kill him!"

Then suddenly the door to the MPD station flung open and Melchett the Hedgehog stormed onto the exercise yard with his assistant Big Dave the Gopher following him. He did not look very pleased at all to see that one of his prisoners was stuck on top of the wall because of the barbed wire there. He and Big Dave marched over to the wall and stared up at him.

"Oy! Marcus!" he yelled "What do you think you're doing up there you deranged dumpling?

"The crazy Martian guy threw me up here for no reason!" yelled Marcus.

"Don't you lie to me you horrible boy!" snarled Melchett "How can someone as tiny and skinny as Marik possibly throw a big boy like you up onto that wall? Judging by Marik's size, I doubt he could even throw me about!"

We'll see about that hog face! thought Marik bitterly.

"Big Dave, get him down will you?" asked Melchett.

"Oakey Dokey Rokey Cokey." said Big Dave rather stupidly.

Big Dave was a rather big gopher so he could reach the stuck Marcus easily. He grabbed Marcus by the tail and pulled on it as hard as he could. Marcus screamed like a stuck pig as Big Dave pulled and pulled on his long slim tail. Big Dave finally managed to pull Marcus off the barbed wire but all that did was harm Marcus even more. His uniform was torn in many places and his arms were full of cuts. Melchett looked at him and tutted to himself.

"Well after that experience I can't guarantee you'll be trying to escape again in a hurry." said Melchett, sharply prodding Marcus in the stomach with his baton "Now come with me and I'll get your uniform replaced."

He led the gerbil away from the exercise yard and towards the station. As Marcus walked past Marik, Marik stuck his tongue out at

him and mouthed to him "Loser". Marcus glared at him and drew his finger across his throat. But Marik didn't care. He'd finally had some glory in this prison. He'd managed to get some jerks off his back and he got an inmate into trouble. Things were definitely improving now Scourge had gone. But that didn't mean Marik wanted to stay here, he still wanted to escape and hopefully with the help of his new friend Lola Gunn, he would escape from this wretched place...

Later that afternoon, things went downhill for poor Marik. After lunch everybody went out into the exercise yard to do their usual stuff, lift weights, play basketball and play cards. Marik and Lola sat on the bench near the wall again and they began to discuss their plans on how they were going to escape from the prison.

"We know one thing already and that's we can't escape by getting over the wall." said Lola, notifying the gerbil's epic fail earlier.

"Yeah." said Marik "The barbed wire will get us stuck. But I can just use my energy wave attacks to destroy that barbed wire and that way, it can't be a problem for us."

"Aye." said Lola "But we have to get over the wall first and we're not the least bit tall enough for that."

"I would be able to fly us over the wall, if my jet shoes weren't damaged." muttered Marik, looking at the soles of his shoes.

They were heavily cracked and the jet boosters built into them had been crushed from when his ship exploded**. And yet somehow, Marik could still use them to run fast.

"The only way we can get over the wall is if one of us gives the other a leg up and help them get onto the wall and then the person on top of the wall can reach down and help the other person get over." suggested Marik.

"That'll definitely work." said Lola "Because if I stand on top of you, I'll reach that wall easily and I'm sure I can help you get onto the wall."

"Good." said Marik "We have our escape plan and we are going to do it…tonight."

"Sounds good to me." said Lola dryly "I'm not staying here another day. There are too many idiots in one place and they're all boys."

Marik fumed at her, clearly offended at what Lola just said. Lola recoiled and quickly corrected herself.

"I don't mean you Marik I mean the others. You're the only smart boy in this prison."

"That's better." hissed Marik "Now; do you have any idea on how we are going to get out of our cells when they put us away for the night?"

"I do indeed Martian boy." said Lola with a sly grin on her face.

She reached into her shoe and she pulled out something small and silver. It was shaped like a bullet only it was a little larger then a normal bullet. She showed it to Marik.

"I will slip this device under the glass door just as it lowers and it'll prevent my door from closing." she said "Then when the warden tries to see what the problem is, I'll knock him out and get you out of your cell and then the two of us can make a break for it."

Marik smiled an evil smile at Lola.

"You really are prepared for anything aren't you?" he purred to her.

"Well when you're hunting for people to kill, you have to be prepared for anything that might come your way." said Lola "And I prepared myself for in case I ever got captured so I'm easily going to escape from this dump."

Then suddenly a voice boomed around the exercise yard and made Marik and Lola jump. The voice belonged to none other then Melchett the Hedgehog.

"Attention inmates. You are all to line up in rows of ten, immediately!" boomed Melchett's voice from the intercom.

"What's going on now?" moaned Lola "Is someone causing trouble?"

"Well I hope Melchett doesn't pin the blame on me." said Marik "I haven't been near the stupid cop all day."

Marik and Lola stood up from the bench and lined up with the other inmates. There were forty rows of ten all standing there and waiting for Melchett to come out onto the yard and explain what the situation was. The door to the station opened and out stormed a very cross and grumpy looking Melchett. His face was redder then a ripe tomato and it looked like someone was in for the chop. Marik just scowled at Melchett, wondering what the ill-tempered police hog was bothered about now. Melchett stood amongst the line of inmates as if he was a general in an army standing in front of a row of soldiers and waiting to give the command. The inmates stood to attention and remained tight-lipped. Melchett narrowed his eyes and stroked his moustache.

"Now you horrible people." said Melchett in a nasty voice "You may be wondering what the problem is now hmm?"

Nobody answered the police-hog so Melchett explained the reason to them.

"You all know that at lunch times, after you've all eaten you go out immediately onto the yard or back into your cell if you don't want to go out onto the yard." said Melchett "And somebody has broken that rule."

"What do you mean Melchett?" asked an inmate in the front row.

Melchett pointed a finger at the inmate like a pistol and said

"One of you horrible inmates though it was funny to sneak like a serpent into my office and gobble up my specially prepared lunch!" snapped Melchett "Do you really think for one bleeding minute that I'm going to eat the food I give to you? My lunch is a lunch fit for a well working and well respected officer and one of you disgusting inmates decided to pinch it and eat it! And don't retort to me about it being one of the officers because the officers know better then to steal each other's meals!" he said sharply at an inmate that looked

like he was about to protest "It was one of you inmates, I know it was! Now speak up you guilty wretch!" he yelled at the crowd "Which one of you stole my lunch?"

The crowd remained silent, none of them looking guilty or like they were about to own up. Marik and Lola looked at each other, wondering who the culprit was and who was hiding things from the police-hog. Then Marik spotted the nervous-wreck known as Skittles. He was shaking like a leaf and praying to god Melchett didn't point the finger at him. Marik could see Skittles had spots of tomato ketchup on his chin, which the prairie-dog quickly wiped off to avoid being found out. No inmate in the prison had ketchup on their lunches and dinners so that only meant one thing. Skittles was the lunch thief. But if Marik told on him, Melchett would likely not believe him since Melchett hated Marik with a burning passion so he didn't say anything. Lola saw who Marik was looking at and figured out what the Martian had figured out. She was just about to raise her arm and tell on Skittles until Skittles raised his arm up and shrieked Melchett's name. Melchett saw Skittles' arm and he pointed sharply at him.

"What do you want you cowardly little fiend?" snarled Melchett.

"I know who stole your lunch!" shrieked Skittles "It was him!"

He pointed directly at Marik the Martian. Skittles didn't really have anyone to blame, he just decided to blame the first person he pointed at and Marik was the unfortunate one he pointed at. Marik immediately got angry and retorted.

"No it certainly was not!" he growled "I was in the yard the entire time; I haven't been anywhere near Melchett's office so how dare you accuse me you ingrain!"

"Marik!" snarled Melchett, stomping over to the Martian and signalling for the inmates to move so he could get closer to him "I should have guessed! You didn't like my treatment to you the first day you were here so you thought it was funny to get your own back on me by stealing my lunch!"

"I didn't do it you stupid, idiotic, blind, gormless hog-head!" roared

Marik "Do you not get the meaning of those words? I-did-not-steal-your-lunch!" he spat at him, shouting the words out individually.

"You would say that would you?" sniffed Melchett.

"Melchett you dumbass, Marik is innocent!" snapped Lola "And to prove it, I bet he can't even name you the food you have on your lunch can you Marik?"

"Well Marik, if you did eat my lunch then what food was prepared for me today?" asked Melchett, expecting an answer.

"No idea because I didn't eat it." said Marik "I know who did though."

"It was Skittles." said Lola, answering for Marik since she knew Melchett wouldn't believe the Martian.

"And however did you know that?" demanded Melchett sharply.

"I saw him wiping tomato ketchup off his chin." said Marik.

"That's a lie!" Skittles immediately claimed.

Big mistake though. Skittle's immediate claim of innocence made Melchett suspicious. Melchett stormed over to the prairie-dog and sniffed his face. A familiar scent drifted off Skittles and into Melchett's nose.

"Tomato ketchup." he said dryly.

"OK I confess!" shrieked Skittles, bursting into tears "I stole your lunch but the Martian blackmailed me into doing so! He threatened to break my arm if I didn't steal your lunch and he wanted to eat it all to himself but I ate it instead since I was so hungry I couldn't stop myself!"

"I did nothing of the sort!" retorted Marik "Why ever would I blackmail someone into pinching food supplies? And I've never seen you or even talked to you yet so how can I have possibly blackmailed you?"

"SILENCE!" boomed Melchett at the top of his voice.

The yard fell into silence.

"Skittles, you will go back to your cell as punishment for stealing my lunch." said Melchett "And Marik, you will be beaten by me for blackmailing."

"I DID NOT BLACKMAIL ANYBODY!" screamed Marik.

But Melchett wasn't listening. He stormed over to the robe-wearing Martian, pushed him onto his tummy and began whacking him on his back with his baton. The inmates all watched with glee as Marik was beaten by the police-hog, even Skittles seemed to be enjoying this. Lola watched Marik get beaten and watching this just made her angry. How dare they beat Marik for something he didn't do? Melchett is one dumb cop isn't he? Not to mention, this was exactly the reason why Lola hated males, because they always resort to violence and all this infuriated her. Melchett stopped beating Marik and he put his baton away. Marik lay there, feeling very annoyed and very furious. Melchett's beating had done little to nothing to him due to his tough body. Melchett stormed out of the yard, dragging the whimpering Skittles with him and into the station. The moment Melchett left, the yard returned to its normal activity. Lola knelt down beside the furious and beaten Marik and affectionately patted him on the back.

"Poor you Marik." said Lola softly "Do the cops always do that to you?"

"Always, whenever I misbehave it's the bat or the taser." said Marik crossly "They love to hurt me those stupid cops do."

"Didn't that hurt though?" said Lola "Melchett was whacking you hard enough to break your spine and you seem to be alright!"

"Martians are well muscled and have tough bodies." said Marik "Melchett would have to whack me for four hours until he can finally hurt me."

"Wow, you Martians are tough aren't you?" said Lola "You're definitely more interesting then all the other Mobians on this planet."

"Well we Martians are incredible." said Marik "And I'll show Melchett just how incredible I can be when me and you break out of this prison tonight."

"Yeah." said Lola "I'll show them that no one keeps Lola Gunn under heavy lockdown. Hopefully when I break out of prison, someone will hire me to shoot that stupid hedgehog Melchett. If not, then I'll just do it myself when I feel like it."

Marik smiled at Lola. He knew that once he and Lola escaped, they would become a great criminal duo together and Sonic and friends would get more then they bargained for. The only thing they had to do was escape the prison, and they had the perfect plan for that so escape was certain. Or was it…?

Night time arrived at the prison. The yard was completely empty and all the prisoners had been escorted back to their cells for the night. General Chipper had been given the unfortunate task of escorting Marik back to his cell. Chipper hated doing that, especially since Marik had that horrible, ugly scowl on his face all the time that made him shiver. This time however, Marik seemed a little calmer then usual. He didn't scowl at General Chipper at all, he just kept a straight face as the police chipmunk escorted him to his cell. General Chipper began to wonder what was up with Marik right now. Maybe life in prison was beginning to tame the Martian after all. General Chipper put Marik into his cell and closed the door. Marik just stood there with his arms behind his back and a casual expression on his face. General Chipper began to feel a little uneasy about Marik's sudden change in behaviour so he quickly moved onto the next cell. There was only Lola Gunn left to put away. While Lola waited for General Chipper to put Marik away, she put the bullet shaped object on the floor just under where the door was going to descend down and waited for Chipper to put her away. General Chipper arrived behind her and lightly pushed her into the cell.

"I hope you enjoy your first night here Miss Gunn." said General Chipper "Because all nights will be like this from now on."

"Don't call me Miss Gunn!" snarled Lola, pointing her finger like a

pistol at him.

"Sorry." said General Chipper sarcastically.

General Chipper pressed a button on the key pad next to Lola's cell and the glass door began to descend down to the floor. The door hit the bullet object and stopped right there but General Chipper didn't seem to notice. General Chipper walked away from Lola's cell and stretched. It had been a busy day for him and he was looking forward to a good night's sleep. However, he wasn't going to get one. The bullet shaped object Lola had planted under the door had kept the door just centimetres above the ground. That was more then enough for Lola to slip her fingers under the door and lift it up. She pulled as hard as she could on the glass door. General Chipper heard Lola struggling and straining and he ran back to her cell. Lola finally praised the door open and leapt out of her cell just as General Chipper arrived. General Chipper panicked and tried to run away but Lola grabbed him by the collar and threw him into the cell. She scooped up the bullet object and closed the door. Now General Chipper was trapped in Lola's cell. The other inmates had watched all this and were very amused. General Chipper got to his feet and pounded feebly on the door.

"You open this door Lola!" he snarled "This is your cell not mine!"

"You idiots have made the grave mistake of thinking you can contain the great bounty hunter Lola Gunn." she purred to Chipper tauntingly "And this mistake will be a costly one on your part. Bye."

She turned away from General Chipper and ran over to Marik's cell. She pressed the button on the key pad and Marik's cell door opened up. Marik stepped out of the cell and smiled at Lola.

"Thank you Lola." said Marik "I'm getting tired of sleeping on the cold hard floor of my cell."

"You're welcome Martian boy." said Lola "Now before we escape, I need to make a stop somewhere. I'm not staying in this prison outfit so I'm getting my combat suit back."

"Should I stay here and wait?" asked Marik "I can't imagine you

being content with the idea of me watching you change out of your clothes after all."

"You can make your way to the yard while I get changed." said Lola "Wait for me and once I arrive, we can break for it."

"Got it." said Marik "See you on the yard."

And with that, Marik ran out of the cell blockade while Lola ran off to find the room that contained all the prisoner's original costumes and belongings. Marik ran down the corridors and sooner or later, found the entrance to the yard. He went through the doors and ran onto the yard. It had only just occurred to Marik who quiet and peaceful the yard was at night. Maybe it was because the yard was completely empty save for him and there was no one else around. Marik ran over to the far end of the yard where the only obstacles in his way now were the prison walls. Marik remembered the plan. He swiped at the barbed wire on top of the walls with his arm and sent an energy wave sweeping across the top. The barbed wire was ripped clean off the wall, leaving a path for Marik and Lola to get over the wall without any problem. Marik then began to think to himself.

"Should I make a break for it and leave Lola behind?" he wondered "Or should I stick with the plan and wait for her? Hmmm…."

On the one hand Marik did things on his own and didn't need an accomplice. On the other hand, Lola may prove very useful since she can weasel her way out of even the best of prisons it seems and she was being very kind and generous helping a creature she's never met before escape from prison. Not to mention, she found him amusing and applauded his efforts on trying to kill the Acorn Family and ransack the kingdom. Plus, even if Marik tried to escape without Lola, he couldn't since he couldn't climb up the wall and over. Marik's mind was made up.

"I'm getting out of here…WITH Lola." he said to himself "And once I'm out, she can serve me up until I turn Mobius into a war zone and then I'll lock her up and keep her as my little pet."

He began to picture Lola as his pet in his foul little mind. What a

glorious image that was for him! Now Marik had made up his mind, all he had to do was lean against the wall and wait for Lola to show up which hopefully wouldn't take too long.

Back in the cell blockade, Melchett and Big Dave were passing by the cells, ticking off prisoners as they went to make sure everybody was back in their cell.

"Harold?" he asked as he passed by the lion's cell.

"Here." answered Harold.

"Vulcan?"

"Here." replied Vulcan.

"Marik?"

No answer.

"Marik!" shouted Melchett.

Still no answer. Big Dave peered into the cell and pulled a goofy face.

"Um…Melchett. I think Marik has vanished into thin air." he said dopily "His cell is empty!"

Melchett's blood ran cold. He pressed his face against the door and screamed in terror. Marik's cell was empty! That must mean Marik had escaped! But how? No one ever escaped from Empire City's MPD station! Then suddenly, Melchett heard pounding on a cell door next to Marik's. Melchett ran over to the cell and got such a nasty shock, his moustache almost fell off.

"General Chipper?" he shrieked "What happened to you?"

He opened the door quickly. The glass door raised up and freed General Chipper from the cell. General Chipper burst out and began frantically shrieking.

"Melchett! Lola Gunn has escaped!" he blurted "We must catch her

before she gets out of the prison!"

"Lola Gunn has escaped as well?" cried Melchett "Oh this is a dark night for this prison! Marik and Lola, the two most dangerous convicts in this prison are making a break for it!"

"Marik's escaped as well?" exclaimed General Chipper "Of all the bad luck that could happen!"

"Well come on you idiots!" yelled Melchett "We can't let those two heathens escape!"

With that said, Melchett whipped out his pistol, General Chipper whipped out his bat and Big Dave whipped out his bat. Then the three cops ran out of the blockade and began searching all over the station. The moment they left, the inmates began talking amongst each other.

"Hey Harold." said Vulcan "Do you think Marrrrik and Lola will escape?"

"Fifty Mobiums says they don't." said Harold.

"I dunno." said Stella "They might make it. After all, Lola is a cunning and slippery customer isn't she?"

"I bet fifty Mobiums that Lola escapes and Marik doesn't." better Loretta "That little shrimp can't possibly get over the walls and knowing Lola, she'll ditch him the moment she gets over."

After waiting for what seemed like a long time, Lola finally arrived onto the yard. Marik beamed. Now Lola was here they could make a break for it. Lola ran up to Marik and stopped just in front of him. Marik stared at Lola. She was no longer in her prison uniform. She was in her olive green combat suit she always wore complete with chest plate and shoulder pads, gloves, shoes, backpack and belt. Since Sonic had destroyed her pistols the time they'd fought***her gun holsters were empty. Marik was impressed, she looked like a very imposing figure in that outfit.

"What are you staring at?" asked Lola sharply.

"Your outfit Lola." said Marik "You look marvellous in it. It makes you look like a very imposing and intimidating figure for many a faint hearted soul. No wonder you're a bounty hunter."

"Thank you." said Lola "That's why I dress like this, people fear me in this outfit. I did have a helmet to go with it but I lost it, unfortunately, so I may need to get a new one."

"Now you're here, we can merrily make our way over this wall and to freedom." said Marik.

Marik put his hands side by side and stood near the wall. Lola put her foot onto Marik's hands and she hoisted herself up to the wall's height and reached as far as she could for the top. Her fingers managed to grip the top of the wall. Now that she had gripped the top of the wall, she pulled herself up onto the wall, using all the strength she could. Unfortunately, just as Lola was pulling herself onto the wall, Melchett, Chipper and Big Dave burst onto the yard, each wielding a baton. Marik instantly turned around and swiped his arms at them, sending an energy wave sweeping towards the three cops. The wave smacked all three cops at once and they were all swept off their feet and sent falling onto their backs. Lola turned around while on top of the wall to see what was happening and she got very mad.

"Must Melchett and his goons ruin everything just as we're about to escape?" she grumbled.

"Never mind that Lola, get me over the wall before they get back up!" shrieked Marik.

"OK, OK! Don't yell at me!" snapped Lola, lying down on her tummy and reaching down to grab Marik by the hand.

Marik leaped up and grabbed Lola's hands. Lola almost fell off the wall but she managed to regain her balance with her legs and tail and she began to pull Marik off the ground. Unfortunately, Big Dave got back to his feet and he grabbed Marik by the legs just as Lola was pulling him on top of the wall.

"Get off me you lumbering bag of meat!" snarled Marik, trying to kick

at Big Dave.

Big Dave was a very strong cop and he had a very tight grip. Even a Martian as tough as Marik would have trouble wiggling out of Big Dave's grasp. Lola pulled on Marik's arms and tried as hard as she could to wrench the Martian out of Big Dave's grasp and Big Dave pulled on Marik's legs and tried to wrench him out of Lola's grasp. Marik yelped and shrieked as Lola and Big Dave pulled on his limbs and began a game of tug of war with him.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow! Be careful you twits! You're going to rip my limbs off if you're not careful!" he squealed.

"Let go of Marik you blithering idiot!" yelled Lola, tugging ever harder on the Martian's arms. Her face was beginning to turn bright red through strain and effort.

"Duh, why?" asked Big Dave stupidly.

"Because I told you to now let go of him!" grunted Lola.

"Don't let go of him Big Dave!" shouted Melchett, whipping a taser out of his pocket.

He ran over to Lola and he zapped her on the wrist with the taser. Lola squealed and let go of Marik's right arm. That was all Big Dave needed, now Lola let go of one arm, Big Dave yanked Marik out of Lola's grasp and the bounty hunter skunk teetered and wobbled on top of the prison wall. General Chipper lunged up at the wall to grab Lola by the leg and pull her down but Lola wobbled and leaned backwards and fell off the wall and…landed on the other side of the wall on her back. Lola was now free from prison and free to kill for money once again but Marik was still in need of help. Lola got up to her feet and dusted herself off. She looked at the wall and just shrugged.

"Well, I tried and I failed. Prison is Marik's problem now, not mine." she said "I'm not risking going back in there to rescue him. I may get re-captured so Marik will have to escape himself."

With that said, the bounty hunter skunk turned turtle and ran like

heck as fast as she could.

"Now I'm free, I can get some much needed revenge on that stupid hedgehog who caused me to miss out on the biggest bounty of my career." she said to herself.

Lola disappeared into the darkness of the night. Night time was Lola's best time since she blended into the darkness perfectly due to her black and white fur and it would be very hard to track her down. Now the skunk had escaped, she was free to shoot for money and get revenge on Sonic the Hedgehog. But Lola had other plans, plans that involved more then just shooting and killing Sonic herself…

Back in the prison, Marik and Big Dave had a very fierce scuffle with one another. Big Dave fought to keep hold of Marik and Marik fought to get out of the gopher's grasp.

"Let go of me you wretched cretin!" snarled Marik, viciously slashing Big Dave across the face with his metal claws.

Big Dave screamed in pain as blood began to stream from five fresh cuts Marik had slashed onto his face. He let go of Marik to rub his bloody cheek better and Marik kicked Big Dave away as he ran in a random direction. General Chipper ran after him in a desperate attempt to catch him but Marik was too fast. Even when his jet shoes weren't on, Marik could run faster then the average person so General Chipper would never catch him. General Chipper ran as fast as he could but Marik was just too fast for him to catch and sooner or later, the chipmunk was beginning to run out of breath. Marik looked over his shoulder and stuck his orange tongue out at him.

"You'll never catch me cretin!" he cackled "I can run for long periods so you'll never be able to keep up with me!"

Marik should have known better then to look over his shoulder and gloat while running for it since there were walls all around him and he was bound to run into one if he wasn't careful. Marik looked forward only to see he was running towards a wall and he tried to stop himself but he was too late. He crashed straight into the wall and he knocked himself over onto his back. Marik felt slightly dazed

and confused and he tried to figure out which way was up. He picked himself up but he felt a little wobbly and his vision was still fazed a little so he wouldn't be getting away in a hurry. Seizing his chance, Melchett ran up to Marik and zapped him in the neck with the taser. Marik shrieked in pain and collapsed to the ground. The taser had knocked him out and now Marik was subdued, Melchett could effortlessly escort him back to his cell.

"Well we've been lucky enough to catch Marik." Melchett said to himself, picking Marik up by the arms and carrying him away "Pity we lost Lola Gunn though. I shall send some police men to look out for her. She must be recaptured! She's too dangerous to be on the loose!"

"I'll send a search squad to look for her tomorrow." said General Chipper "It's too late to be sending men out to find someone."

"Very well." said Melchett "I'm just glad we've recaptured Marik. Let's get the heathen back to his cell before he wakes up."

Big Dave took Marik from Melchett, draped him over his shoulder and ran back to the station to put Marik back in his cell. As Melchett and Chipper walked back to the station, Melchett began thinking to himself.

"You'll not stay free Lola." he mused "I will recapture you, mark my words I will."

Two days had passed since Marik's failed escape attempt and things had been no better for the Martian. He had received extra beating from the inmates and even though he'd been able to fend them off, he couldn't hold his own against all the inmates and they had managed to get the drop on him. The cops had been especially harsh to Marik, making him work harder then the other inmates and beating him constantly. Marik had been a very miserable Martian and because of his treatments he had been sneaking out of the yard and back into his cell to avoid getting a beating. Today though, was going to be different. Marik was sitting at the back of the cell with his back against the wall and he began reflecting on his recent

treatment and predicament. These thoughts made him very furious and he gritted his teeth and clenched his fists.

"How dare Lola abandon me and leave me here!" he growled "I thought we were going to be a good team but she ditches me and runs for it and leaves me in the dirt! Well I'm going to add her to my list of people I must kill now! From now on, all Mobians are my enemies! Even evil ones!"

His ranting and moaning was interrupted by someone opening the blockade door and storming in.

"Oh for the love of Pluto!" Marik moaned "Not more inmates to make my life miserable!"

He began tenderly rubbing his arms as if he remembered all the pain that had been inflicted on him in the prison. The person who stormed into the cell blockade stopped outside Marik's cell, opened the door and threw in the new arrival. It was General Chipper and he didn't seem very happy indeed. Marik looked closer at the inmate he'd just thrown into his cell. The inmate looked a little familiar. It was a yellow fox with three hairs on his head and two tails. Marik's blood boiled in rage. It was none other then Sonic's annoying friend Tails! Marik then calmed down, what on Mobius had Tails done to get arrested? Wasn't he supposed to be a good guy? After throwing Tails on the ground, General Chipper closed the cell door.

"Hopefully a few years in this cell will teach you a lesson." he said coldly to Tails "No one gets away with anything while we're around."

Tails ran up to the glass and pressed his face against it, ready to protest but General Chipper had already begun to walk away.

"Don't leave me here! Let me out! I'm innocent! So is Sonic! You can't leave me in here!" Tails screamed at the top of his voice, pounding feebly on the door.

But General Chipper had already left the cell blockade. Tails' eyes poured with tears and he pounded the floor at the foot of the door.

"It's not fair!" he sobbed "Why won't those stupid policemen believe

us? Me and Sonic didn't rob that jewellery store, someone else did but they won't believe us! Why, why, why?"

"Welcome to my territory Tails!" snarled Marik evilly.

He couldn't wait for Tails' reaction. Tails stopped crying and began to shiver with fear as if something gripped him by the throat.

"That…voice…!" he gasped "No…no…It can't be! Not…"

He turned around and saw Marik sitting in a corner at the back of the cell. Tails recognized him instantly and his eyes widened.

"MARIK THE MARTIAN?" he screamed.

Marik just scowled at Tails and he bared his sharp metal claws as Tails shook with fear with his back against the glass door…

Footnotes:

*** See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Stories 26-27**

**** See Arc 2**

*****See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 27**

Marik the Martian and Lola Gunn together, quite the villainous pair aren't they? Maybe I should make them a love pair...nah! Join me next time as we watch Marik escape from prison with the help of an unlikely ally...Reviews are welcome.

Marik the Prisoner 3

Arc 3: Marik the Prisoner

Takes place during Stories 26-34 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 3: Breakout!

As if things couldn't get any worse. Marik had been abused by cops and inmates, he'd made a failed attempt to escape and been betrayed by someone he thought he could make an alliance with. Now he had Tails the Fox, one of his most hated enemies ever as his cellmate. Tails just stood there with his back pressed against the door and shaking like mad while Marik scowled at him.

"No! No! No! It can't be!" gasped Tails "I'm in the same cell as you?"

Marik just snorted at his cellmate.

"Do you think I'm thrilled to have you as a cellmate too?" he scoffed.

"But, but you can't possibly be here now!" exclaimed Tails "You're supposed to be dead! Cosmo told me your ship blew up with you inside it!"

Marik groaned angrily.

"So Cosmo the little vermin has told you all about my humiliating defeat at the hands of her and Cream the Rabbit* has she?" he said "Oh well, I'd best explain how I'm still alive now."

Tails sat down against the glass door as Marik explained everything to him.

"True I was blown up thanks to that stupid Chao Cheese for setting my ship to self destruct but I was never killed." said Marik "I actually managed to get through the escape hatch in the roof but before I could fly away, the ship exploded and I was sent hurling through the

air and into the ground. A puny fall from the sky isn't enough to kill someone as tough as myself so I obviously lived." he added "And that's all I can remember. I have no idea how I got here although I assume the cops got me while I was knocked out."

"Well at least they did something right." muttered Tails bitterly "You belong in a prison cell after all."

Marik decided to ignore the fox's insult.

"So, what the hell are you doing here?" demanded Marik "You're a good guy, good guys don't belong in a prison cell!"

"Well that idiot Melchett thinks me and Sonic robbed a jewellery store so he's arrested me and Sonic." said Tails "I'm in here with you and Sonic's in Central City, both of us doing time for something we haven't done."

Marik exploded into a fit of laughter and he clutched his sides as he rolled around snickering. This was the most entertaining thing he had ever heard since his imprisonment.

"Oh my goodness! You two have been falsely imprisoned for something you haven't done?" he laughed "Oh that's just made me day! If only I was outside to celebrate it properly instead of this cold dark place!"

Tails just let Marik continue laughing about him and Sonic being in prison, held his head in his hands and let out a long heavy sigh. After Marik finished laughing Tails suddenly decided to ask him something.

"By the way Marik, why are you wearing a robe instead of a prison outfit like the others?" asked Tails.

"Well for starters I'm not wearing that hideous orange filth they call clothes!" spat Marik "And it's cold in here so I put my robe on. Martians carry these when going on trips to other planets in case it's cold and we can fold them up so tiny it looks like we haven't got one anywhere."

"So all the while you've been here, you've had that thing folded up in

your jacket pocket?" said Tails.

"Precisely." said Marik "And I'm so much warmer wearing this then that disgusting prison outfit."

"But haven't the cops protested or anything?" said Tails "I mean why should you be allowed to wear a nice long robe whereas the others have to wear prison outfits?"

"They've tried to take my robe away but all I need to do is growl at them and bear my claws and they keep away from me." said Marik, showing Tails his shiny metal hand.

The fox gasped at it.

"What have you done to your hand?" he cried.

"I badly crippled it after Sonic threw me off that cliff last time we met**." explained Marik "I installed cybernetics into it to get it working again and it works ever so nicely. I was able to electrocute people but the voltage compactor is broken."

He showed Tails the palm of his metal hand which had a cracked orb in the middle. Tails studied it closely with interest.

"Is that orb in the palm of your hand the voltage compactor?" asked Tails.

"It is indeed." said Marik "If it wasn't broken I would have taken great deliberation in electrocuting you right now but it is broken so I can't do anything about it."

"How strong are your electric attacks?" asked Tails.

"Strong enough to hurt but not kill." said Marik, frowning as if that was a major design flaw "So if I did shock you, you wouldn't have to worry about dying, although I could probably kill if I kept it up for as long as I wished…"

"Hasn't life in prison taught you anything Marik?" shrieked Tails.

"Life in prison has taught me it's a harsh, boring, miserable place full

of bullies and cops who love to hurt inmates and I am so desperate to escape from it." said Marik "And once I escape maybe I should change my ways."

"Maybe I should be a kind hearted soul from now on and then I will never be locked away again." he thought "I could apologize for murdering the King and Queen and I could apologize to Cosmo for all the pain I've tried to inflict on her. And maybe I could borrow a spaceship and leave this planet forever so you don't have to worry about me again."

Tails couldn't believe what he was hearing. Life in prison really had taught Marik a lesson or two. Marik appeared to be a changed Martian and he seemed desperate to escape and turn over a new leaf so he would never be locked up again. But was Marik being serious or was this all a trick? Tails didn't know but he knew he had to play along for now and not jump to conclusions.

"Hey Marik." said Tails "If you really have changed and want to start a new life then I'll be happy to help you escape."

Marik was speechless.

"You would help me escape?" he said in surprise "Well that's very kind of you but don't you think that will make it look like you really have turned traitor and therefore give the police a real reason to arrest you?"

"I'll be able to clear up the misunderstanding somehow." said Tails "But I'm only going to help you on one condition. That you are absolutely truthful on changing your ways and you're not doing this to trick me."

"Tails, tricks don't do it for me anymore." said Marik "I swear on my father's soul that this is not a trick and I really will change my wicked ways forever."

"That's good to know." said Tails "And as a token of gratitude for changing your ways, I'll fix your voltage compactor for you."

"How very kind of you." said Marik ""I'll direct you so you don't go

wrong when fixing it. I just wonder if there's anywhere in this prison I can fix it in."

"There maybe a workshop or something." said Tails "We'll have to see once we get outta here."

"And that will be any moment now." said Marik "I can hear General Chipper coming and announcing it's exercise time."

Marik was right on that. General Chipper had come to announce it was exercise time for all the prisoners.

"OK everybody, it's time for the exercise yard." he announced "I want you all in single file and to follow me to the yard just as always. No fighting or being rough while you're out there." he added with a tone in his voice that suggested fights in the yard had happened before.

All the prison cell doors opened and all the prisoners marched out and lined up in single file. Tails and Marik were in the centre of the line and Tails began to quiver.

"I'm not going to like this." he whispered to himself.

Then one by one, the prisoners marched out of the cell room and out into the exercise yard. Tails hoped he would survive this as he had a feeling it was going to be rough and hard…

Outside in the exercise yard, the inmates did what they usually did while they were outside. Get together for friendly meetings, play basketball or lift weights. Some of the inmates however decided to have some fun. They had heard all about Sonic and Tails getting arrested and they were delighted to see that Tails was in the same prison as they were. Now they could beat Tails up just to make him feel sorry for himself and for the fact he was Sonic's sidekick. Marik sensed this and decided to keep out of the inmate's way. But not a single inmate bothered with Marik right now. Instead they all surrounded a very nervous looking Tails who was squeezing one of his tails in worry. He looked up nervously at the gang of inmates

surrounding him.

"Um…hi?" he said in a small voice.

"Well look what we've got here!" said Vulcan the Bat "It's none other then that brat Tails, the sidekick of the supersonic hero Sonic the Hedgehog!"

"How the heck did you get in here shrimp?" sneered an inmate who was a jaguar with blue spots instead of black.

"I'm in here for something I didn't do." said Tails "But stupid Melchett doesn't believe me."

"So you were framed eh?" said Vulcan "Well I tink we should rrrrough him up a little before someone proves his innocence and bails him out!"

"You said it Vulcan buddy!" said his friend Harold the Lion. He cupped his hand around his fist and grinned malevolently "Get him boys and girls!"

"Oh please don't hurt me!" begged Tails "I'll be good! I'll do what you want! Honest!"

But the inmates were having none of it. They lashed out at Tails and they showered the poor fox with heavy hard punches that could make Knuckles the Echidna jealous and they hit him everywhere on his body, including his face which was the primary target of the inmates. Marik just stood by and watched with an evil grin on his face. It was nice to see someone else getting beaten up for once. He had been a popular target for the inmates but now Tails was their new favourite punching bag. This was by far the only entertainment he was going to get in this prison, watching Tails get slugged over and over. After the inmates finished punching Tails, the ox, who used to be one of Scourge the Hedgehog's minions before he broke out, picked Tails up by his head and throw him to the rhino, who also used to be one of Scourge's minions before he broke out. The rhino caught him and threw him to Loretta the Bear. Loretta caught Tails and threw him to Stella the Ferret. Then Stella threw Tails to the jaguar, who then threw him to Harold and then Vulcan and then

back to the ox. The circle of throwing him around like a rag doll continued until finally, the ox slammed Tails down into the ground as if he was making a touchdown at a rugby match. Tails groaned and lay there on the ground. He felt like his face had been smashed into his skull by a hammer. The inmates laughed at the poor fox and they walked away, still laughing to themselves. Tails lifted his head out of the dirt and he glared at Marik, who was standing there looking at him with an amused grin on his face.

"You jerk!" yelled Tails "Why didn't you help me? Why did you just stand there and let those inmates beat me up?"

"I still feel bitter about my defeat at the hands of Sonic the Hedgehog and I'm always a target for those ingrates so watching you getting beaten up was an amusing novelty for me." said Marik grimly.

"Marik, if you're changing your wicked ways then you shouldn't still feel bitter about losing to Sonic." said Tails, picking himself up and rubbing the dirt off his face.

"Martians hold grudges for a long time Tails." said Marik "It's going to take a while for me to let go of my grudge on Sonic."

"I understand." said Tails "I hold a grudge on my mean cousin and I've held that grudge on him for years."

"Really?" said Marik "He must be mean if you've held a grudge on him for so long."

"I know." said Tails "But luckily, I'll never see him again since he's elsewhere so he can't bother me anymore."

"Good for you." said Marik sarcastically "So, are we going to get my hand fixed?"

"Um…sure." said Tails "If only I knew where the workshop was."

"The only way we're going to find out is ask one of the officers." said Marik "We'll have to tell them a lie as to why we want to go to the workshop and once we're there, we can fix my hand."

Luckily for Tails and Marik, General Chipper was in the yard with all the inmates. He was on duty right now and he didn't seem very pleased about it. He just stood there with a bored looking expression on his face and his hands behind his back. Tails and Marik wondered over to the general and Tails tapped him on the arm. The General looked down at Tails.

"What do you want traitor?" asked General Chipper.

"May me and Marik please use the workshop?" asked Tails "We want to…uh…um…"

"We want to build something for Melchett the Hedgehog." put in Marik "It's uh…a golden plaque that he can hang on the wall in his office."

General Chipper raised a suspicious eyebrow at the two inmates. It wasn't often that inmates offered to make something for a policeman before. And it was even stranger that Marik was offering to make something for Melchett, especially as he tried to kill him last night. Chipper didn't see what harm the two could do in the workshop, especially if they were only making a plaque for Melchett so he decided to let them do so.

"OK then." said Chipper "Follow me and I'll lead you to the workshop."

He led Tails and Marik back into the station and he took them down a straight corridor and turned to the right at the end of the corridor which had a sign saying "Workshop" and an arrow pointing down the corridor. Chipper led them down the corridor and opened a door. Marik and Tails stepped through the door and found themselves in the workshop. The workshop looked just like a workshop at a factory. It had shelves full of toolboxes and workbenches with vices for the workers to use in case they were doing any sawing or drilling in wood. Tails beamed. He loved workshops and he was going to enjoy working in this one. Marik however hadn't been in the workshop yet so this room was new to him.

"You're allowed in here until Melchett gives the order to return to your cells." said Chipper "And for security reasons, I'm going to have

to lock you two in here but I'll be on hand to let you out when recreation time is over. Enjoy yourselves."

And with that General Chipper closed the door and locked it. Tails and Marik didn't seem to notice though. Tails was still pleased with the workshop and how it was so much larger then the one he had back home. Marik folded his arms and glared at the happy fox.

"Will you stop grinning like an idiot and get on with it?" he snarled.

Tails snapped out of his daze and smiled weakly at Marik. His ears drooped back.

"Oh um…yeah…that…OK." he stammered weakly "Sorry."

Tails ran over to one of the shelves and grabbed a toolbox. He carried the toolbox back over to Marik and put it down on the workbench.

"What tools do you think I should use to fix this?" asked Tails.

"I think you'll just need a screwdriver to unscrew the orb." said Marik, holding out his metal hand for Tails to look at "I have a replacement orb in my pocket but unfortunately it's the only one I have."

Marik reached under his robe and into his jacket pocket. He pulled out the replacement orb and set it down onto the workbench.

"So all I need to do is unscrew the old orb and replace it with the new one?" asked Tails.

"You may need to fiddle with the wires a little." said Marik "Because I think there are some wires loose in here (no thanks to those stupid inmates using me as a punching bag!)." he murmured to himself.

Marik rested his metal hand on the workbench with the palm facing up and Tails got to work. He unscrewed the screws on the cracked orb and removed the whole thing from Marik's hand. The whole ordeal didn't seem to give the Martian any discomfort. After removing the orb, Tails could see what was underneath it. There was a circle in the palm of Marik's hand where the orb had once been and it was full of colourful wiring. The wires seemed to be OK.

Tails peered a little closer at the wiring in Marik's hand. That's when he saw something he didn't see the first time. Two pieces of the cracked orb had sliced a few wires in two and gotten themselves tangled up within the mess of wires. Tails stared at them for a moment and then began to rummage into the toolbox. Marik lifted his hand up and peered in the circle in the middle of his hand to see what Tails had been looking at. He noticed the sliced wires and orb fragments tangled up in the wires. He sighed loudly.

"Ugh! I bet when my voltage compactor cracked, some fragments of the orb caved in and fell into the wiring underneath it." he grumbled "I hope Tails can get them out and fix the wiring or it's never going to get fixed."

Tails pulled just about every tool in the toolbox out and lay them down on the workbench. There were about fifty tools lying on the workbench and there was still some left in the toolbox! Tails began to wonder if the toolbox was bigger on the inside as he pulled two more tools out and set them aside. Then at last, he found the tool he was looking for. A pair of thin tweezers. Tails put all the tools back into the toolbox but he left the tweezers out so he could use them to get the orb fragments out of the wiring in Marik's hand.

"OK Marik, I'm gonna have to get those fragments out of the wiring." said Tails "I can't imagine they'll do much good in all the wiring."

"They won't." said Marik "They'll interfere with the electrical circuit of the wires and my electric attacks won't work."

"That's what I thought." said Tails as Marik rested his hand back down on the workbench "I may also have to replace all the sliced wires in there with new wires or it won't work."

"Are there any spare wires around?" asked Marik.

Tails' whiskers drooped down in despair.

"Um…I have no idea." said Tails "I don't think there are any spare wires around here."

"Well that's annoying!" grumbled Marik "How can we fix my hand

now?"

"Maybe I could try fixing the broken wires instead of replacing them completely." suggested Tails "I'm sure there's a way of fixing them."

Tails picked the tweezers up in between his index finger and thumb and he set to pulling the fragments out. He dug deep into the wiring with the tweezers and he fumbled about for the fragments.

"Steady…" warned Marik "Steady…OUCH!" he yelped as Tails accidentally tweaked something sensitive inside his hand "Watch what you're doing you clotted carbuncle!"

"I'm sorry." said Tails "Some of those fragments are deep down in the wiring, I think they're almost at the bottom so I'm gonna have to go deep down with these tweezers."

"Well be careful!" snapped Marik "At the bottom of all that wiring is what's left of my organic hand and it's pretty sensitive!"

Tails nodded and continued searching through the wires. He found two fragments and he grabbed them both with the tweezers. Then, very carefully, he fished them out of the sea of wires in Marik's hand and set them aside on the workbench. Then Tails began searching some more for anymore fragments. He found three more and he pulled them out of Marik's hand. Then he found one last one that was right at the bottom of the wiring. Tails plunged the tweezers down into the wiring and he found the fragment. He gripped it with the tweezers and pulled on it.

"OUCH!" screamed Marik "Watch it wretch!"

"I'm sorry!" snapped Tails "The last fragment is literally embedded in the fleshy stuff under all the wiring so this is going to hurt!"

He pulled on the embedded fragment again. Marik tried to ignore the pain he was feeling right now. He clenched his teeth and screwed his eyes up as Tails pulled the fragment out of the organic parts of his hand. Tails set the fragment aside and he put the tweezers down.

"Now all those fragments have been removed, I can get started on

all that wiring." said Tails

"I've just spotted a soldering iron over there." said Marik, pointing to a shelf with his left hand "You can use that to fix all the snapped wires."

Tails spotted the soldering iron sitting on a shelf that Marik was pointing at. He ran over to the shelf and grabbed the iron. The soldering iron was a long piece of equipment used for soldering wires back together. Tails plugged it into a socket on the wall near the shelves and went back over to the workbench. The plug wire was long enough for Tails to reach the workbench Marik was at and Marik rested his hand down for Tails to get to work.

"Keep your hand still." said Tails "This will take a long time so you'll have to be patient."

Tails turned the iron on and he began to solder one of the snapped wires back together. The iron spouted out hot liquid metal that fused the snapped wires back together. Once it cooled down, the wire would be fixed.

After an hour of soldering the wires together, Tails had finally finished. All that was left for him to do was screw the replacement orb back on and Marik's hand was fixed at last. Unfortunately for him, just as he was screwing the screws back on, Melchett's voice boomed through a speaker above the door.

"Attention inmates!" he boomed "Recreation time is over! Everybody return to your cells immediately!"

"Oh rats!" moaned Tails "I haven't finished yet!"

"Well take the screwdriver with you and you can fix it back in my cell." said Marik

"But I don't have anywhere to hide it." said Tails "My prison uniform hasn't got pockets."

"My jacket has pockets." said Marik "So I'll take it. My robe will hide it from the officers so they'll have no idea we've pinched one of their screwdrivers."

Marik grabbed the screwdriver and he slipped it into his jacket pocket under his robe just as the sound of a key turning in a lock was heard. The lock clicked and the door opened. General Chipper poked his head through the door and said

"Recreation time's over you two. Time to go back to your cell."

Marik and Tails did what they were told and they left the workshop. General Chipper locked the door and led them back to the cell blockade. When they got there, Marik and Tails noticed that every cell in the blockade was full except their own. They had been the last inmates to return. The inmates glared at Tails evilly and they patted their fists as if to say "Watch out boy, we're coming for you again soon!" but Tails ignored them as General Chipper led him and Marik back to his cell. Marik and Tails both went into the cell and General Chipper closed the door behind them and walked further down the blockade to make sure everybody was back in their cells. Tails and Marik sat at the back of the cell and Tails screwed the replacement orb onto Marik's metal hand He tightened the screws one by one with the screwdriver and the orb was beginning to fit snugly back into it's place as it was screwed back on.

"OK, just to tighten this last piece here and…its done." he said.

He tightened the last screw and put the screwdriver down.

"OK Marik, give it a test." said Tails.

Marik pointed a finger as sharp as a steak knife at the bed in the left hand corner of the cell and just as he was hoping to do, he fired a brilliant jolt of electricity at it. He singed the covers and the sheets of the bed and left a big black burn mark on them. Marik smiled happily at his fixed hand.

"Brilliant!" he said "I can electrocute people again! Thank you Tails."

"You're welcome." said Tails "But I do hope you're going to use that thing for good instead of evil."

"Tails, I'm changing my wicked ways once I get out of here." said Marik "I will only use my electric powers for good now. I can't

imagine many criminals getting away from someone like me."

"OK then." said Tails "Now listen Marik, I think I have a plan on how we can get outta here."

"You have a plan?" said Marik "Well I do hope it's a good one."

"It is a good one." retorted Tails "Now listen carefully."

He pulled Marik close and whispered his plan to him. Marik smiled wickedly at what he was hearing.

"Tails, that really is a good plan." said Marik "With your brilliant brain and my strength and powers, we're bound to get out!"

"Yes, yes Marik but please don't kill anyone." begged Tails "That's not going to set a good example."

"I give my word that I will not rid anyone of their lives here." said Marik "Besides, why would I want to kill anyone since I'm good now?"

"Hmm…" said Tails suspiciously.

Then he heard the sound of General Chipper walking by, making sure everybody was back in their cells. Now was the time for step one of the escape plan. Tails and Marik got to their feet and pretended to have an argument just as General Chipper walked past.

"Hey Marik! I thought I told you to leave me alone!" griped Tails "Why don't you pick on someone your own size?"

"What are you gonna do about it shrimpy?" sneered Marik "Tickle me to death with your twin paintbrushes?"

And with that, Tails and Marik pretended to fight each other. Marik tackled Tails and pinned him down while Tails tried to push Marik off of him. General Chipper noticed the scuffle and immediately opened the door to run in and break up the fight.

"Oy! Oy! Break it up you two!" ordered General Chipper "Cellmates

are supposed to play nicely!"

Tails and Marik stopped fighting and ran straight past General Chipper and out of the prison cell! Marik closed the door immediately after leaving so General Chipper was trapped in their cell. General Chipper an up to the door and pounded against it.

"Oy! You let me out this minute!" he yelled at Marik.

Marik just stuck his orange tongue out at him and ran away. He caught up with Tails who had just made it out of the cell blockade.

"Well that was way too easy!" he said "But I don't think the others will be so easy to get past!"

"Don't worry." said Marik "The rest will just be a walk in the park."

Then suddenly something very big and very heavy tackled Tails from behind and sat on him. It was Big Dave and he had a pair of handcuffs with him. Marik stopped running and saw Big Dave trying to apprehend Tails.

"Now I'll just put these thingies on your wrists and then you'll go back to your cell." said Big Dave, snapping the handcuffs on Tails.

But for some reason, he cuffed Tails' tails instead of his wrists.

"Big Dave you big galoot! Why did you just handcuff my tails?" asked Tails.

"Oops, sorry." said Big Dave goofily, realizing his mistake "Shall I take them off?"

"You get off Tails you blundering blockhead!" snarled Marik, swiping the air with his arms and hitting Big Dave with an energy wave.

Big Dave was knocked off of Tails and he rolled across the floor like a beach ball. Marik helped Tails onto his feet and the two ran for it again.

"Thanks for saving me Marik." said Tails.

"Well you fixed my metal hand and you're helping me escape now so I felt like I owed you one so I got that fat cop off you." said Marik "I do hope he won't be too mad about it."

Then suddenly they were both stopped dead in their tracks by Melchett the Hedgehog. He pointed a pistol at them, sideways of course.

"You two are going to get back in your cells or I'm going to pop your guts full of lead." snarled Melchett.

"Why are you holding your gun sideways when everybody else holds them all the way up?" asked Tails.

"It looks cool." said Melchett "Now get back in your cell, now!"

"I think not wretched cop!" bellowed Marik.

He pointed his finger like a dagger at Melchett at let fly a terrific electrical surge that pulsed up Melchett body and made him drop the gun. Melchett screamed loudly as electrical shocks began to surge up and down his body like a current. Tails grabbed Marik by the shoulder and began yelling at him.

"Marik, that's enough! That's enough!" he yelled "Please stop it!"

Marik was reluctant to stop since he hated Melchett so much for his unkind remarks to him during his time in prison but he knew he had to since he was changing his wicked ways. Marik stopped electrocuting Melchett and he left the police-hog panting and gasping on the floor.

"I cannot tell you how much I've been looking forward to zapping that moustached moron." said Marik "Melchett is the most annoying, unkind policeman I've ever seen in my life!"

"I'll say." said Tails "His speech is never delicate, even to his own men. And he's such a stooge too since he stupidly believes that me and Sonic are robbers."

"Agreed." said Marik, glaring at Melchett "This cop takes stupidity to the next level doesn't he? I think he should be fired and replaced

with a much better cop."

Melchett raised his head and glared at Marik and Tails with his amber eyes. He looked like he was about ready to kill them both.

"Oooooh! You're in so much trouble you two savages!" he growled.

"Oh shut up!" snapped Marik, giving Melchett another zap.

This time he only kept it up for three seconds and then he and Tails ran for it again, leaving Melchett sprawling on the floor and trying to get his breath back. Big Dave ran over to Melchett and looked at him with a gormless grin on his face.

"Hey Melchett! You look funny!" he said "Are you trying to be a carpet?"

"Shut up you big baboon!" snapped Melchett "Get General Chipper and then me and you will apprehend Tails and Marik and escort them back to their cells!"

"Yes sir." said Big Dave, running away to find General Chipper.

Melchett picked up his pistol and staggered to his feet. As he watched Tails and Marik disappear down the corridor, he scowled to himself.

"How the heck did Marik zap me like that?" he wondered "He's never done it before."

Meanwhile, Tails and Marik had finally made it out of the station and they ran across the exercise yard and towards the wall which was the only obstacle left for them to overcome. Once they made it over the wall, they would be free. They ran up to the wall and stared up at it helplessly. It was a very tall wall and it was covered with barbed wire at the top. They would cut themselves pretty badly if they tried to climb over that.

"So genius, what do we do now?" asked Marik.

"Well I can't fly us over the wall since Big Dave handcuffed my tails together." said Tails, looking bitterly at his cuffed tails "Why don't

you fly us over Marik?" he asked.

"My shoes were damaged from the explosion too." said Marik, showing Tails the bottom of his shoes which were heavily cracked "So I can't fly anymore."

"Well why didn't you tell me that?" asked Tails, annoyed at this revelation "I could have fixed your shoes for you while I was fixing your hand!"

"I forgot." said Marik "And I didn't think I'd need them fixing since you could have just flown us over the wall but you can't now so we need a plan."

"How about I give you a leg up and you hoist yourself onto the wall and then once you're up there you can pull me up." said Tails "Although we need to do something about the barbed wire at the top."

"No problem." said Marik, swiping the air with both arms.

He sent an energy wave soaring into the thick mass of barbed wire and the waved sliced the wires to pieces, leaving a wide clean empty space for Tails and Marik to safely climb onto and over. Marik smiled at himself and he took his ragged old robe off, revealing his still gleaming black leather jacket and he folded the robe up so small it looked more like a small envelope and he put the robe into his pocket.

"Don't need the robe since I'm not cold anymore." said Marik "Now Tails, let's do this shall we?"

"OK." said Tails.

He put both his hands together and Marik put his foot onto them. Marik hoisted himself up and stretched as far as he could so he could reach the top of the wall. Tails grunted loudly as he tried to lift Marik up and keep him up without falling over. Tails managed to lift Marik high enough to reach the top of the wall with his fingertips. Marik gripped the edge of the wall and tried as hard as he could to pull himself onto the wall. He felt himself slipping so he dug his

metal claws into the wall to stop himself falling. He then threw one of his legs onto the top of the wall and using his leg, he pulled himself onto the top. He wrenched his claws free of the wall and bent over to help Tails. Then suddenly, Melchett the Hedgehog, Big Dave and General Chipper burst out of the station and began running towards Tails with batons in their hands.

"They're escaping! Stop them!" cried Melchett.

Marik watched the policemen coming towards them and Tails began hoping up and down desperately. He suddenly had an evil thought. A very evil thought.

"Marik! Marik! Help me!" cried Tails "The police are coming! Help me get over! Marik! Marik!"

Marik looked down at Tails and grinned a wicked evil grin that could make anyone shudder.

"Where's your precious Sonic now Tails?" he said wickedly.

Tails stopped hopping up and down and stared at Marik in disbelief. His eyes widened and his jaw dropped in horror. Marik wouldn't would he?

"Bye-bye!" said Marik, waving goodbye to Tails and leaping over onto the other side of the wall, laughing demonically.

Tails' heart stopped and his stomach felt sick. Marik hadn't changed at all! He was tricking the poor fox into helping him escape all along! Now he had just freed the most dangerous villain on Mobius and there was nothing he could do about it since he and Sonic were in prison! Tails began to growl in anger.

"Marik! I'll kill you for this!" screeched Tails.

Then suddenly he was tackled from behind by Melchett, Big Dave and General Chipper. They whacked him in the back with their batons and they snapped a pair of handcuffs onto his wrists. Then they hauled the fox onto his feet and dragged him away.

Marik pressed the side of his head against the wall and listened to

the scuffle going on, on the other side of the wall. He smiled evilly as he heard Tails getting beaten by bats and then hauled onto his feet and taken back to his cell. He especially liked Melchett's horrible comments to the little fox. He laughed demonically to himself and he tore up clumps of soil and threw them into the air.

"Free! I'm…FREE! FREE AT LAST!" he bellowed at the sky and continued laughing.

"That fox is such a gullible prat isn't he?" he sneered to himself "He should have remembered I'm a peace hater and peace haters don't turn good no matter what! Well I'm grateful to him for freeing me from that wretched prison!" he added "Now I'm free to cause mayhem and malice once again!"

And with that, he activated his jet shoes and he rocketed off at the fastest speed he could go, laughing a loud, grating, demonic laugh. At long last! He was free from that horrible prison! He was so happy he could scream it to the world. But now he was focused on one thing…revenge on the ones who got him imprisoned in the first place…

Footnotes:

*** See *Arc 2: The Cosmo and Cream Adventure* for the whole story!**

**** See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 24**

Yeah...this part is kinda lame. It's just Ruthless Relatives part 2 with all the other scenes removed and Marik and Tails' scenes extended but it's the only way this could end really. The next arc will be an improvement I promise. Read and Review.

Trouble in Adabat 1

Arc 4: Trouble in Adabat

Takes place during Stories: 52-56

Part 1: The Restless Holiday

Chun-Nan wasn't the only country getting foreign visitors at this moment*. The always sunny country of Adabat was getting a visit from two very well known Royal Fighters. These two were Geoffrey St. John the Skunk and Bunnie Rabbot the Cyborg Rabbit. Geoffrey was a skilled fighter armed with an arm mounted crossbow and he had a tough time trusting people due to a grim event that happened in his childhood**. Bunnie Rabbot was, as her name suggested, half rabbit and half robot. She was half-roboticized by Dr. Eggman and saved from being fully roboticized by Geoffrey*** and since then, the two had been close friends and often enjoyed being in the same mission together. As of this moment, Geoffrey and Bunnie had been given a day off since there wasn't a mission for them. Sonic and his friends were chilling out in Chun-Nan so Bunnie thought it would be nice for her and Geoffrey to spend their day-off in another country and she had picked the country of Adabat, the sunniest place on Mobius. She remembered her first visit to Adabat when she, Amy, Cream, Cosmo and the Chaotix were searching for Chaos Emeralds**** and she had loved it so much she wanted to come back and now she and Geoffrey were chilling out on deckchairs on the beach together in the scorching hot sun. Geoffrey had changed his attire since a full-body combat suit isn't the ideal costume to wear in blazing hot weather and all he was wearing now were a pair of light purple boots, a light purple belt with a piece that went other his shoulder and a light purple glove on his right arm where he wore his arm mounted crossbow. He didn't look so cool without the combat suit but that didn't bother Bunnie since no matter what the skunk wore, he would always be Geoffrey St. John, the one who saved her from full roboticization. Bunnie herself was wearing a big floppy sunhat to keep the sun off her head. Geoffrey breathed in deeply and sighed a relaxed sigh.

"I'm glad you picked this place luv." the skunk said in his thick Australian accent "This is a gorgeous country and the weather is just perfect."

"Ah guess this is why Adabat is a much loved country amongst the Mobians." said the southern-accented rabbit in the deckchair beside Geoffrey "It's the sunniest place on Mobius and it has beautiful sights."

"I especially like Mount Adabat over there." said Geoffrey, sitting up and pointing at the local volcano that stood proudly some way out to sea "It's a cool looking mountain. I wouldn't mind having a climb up it."

"Ah don't think you'd be allowed sugah." said Bunnie "Mount Adabat is actually a volcano but it isn't a very active volcano from what ah've heard so we won't have to worry about it erupting any time soon."

"I see." said Geoffrey, lying back down but keeping his eyes on Mount Adabat "Crikey, a volcano standing in the middle of the sea. I bet when it erupts, the lava just goes into the sea and burns out."

"That's right Geoff." said Bunnie "The people of Adabat all know about that and thus, when Mount Adabat erupts, the little ol' people don't have to worry about a thing when it erupts, it can't harm them."

"Speaking of the volcano." Geoffrey suddenly said "Didn't you say something about finding a Chaos Emerald in there?"

"Ah did Geoffrey." said Bunnie, turning onto her side to face Geoffrey "During the Chaos Emerald hunt we all went on, me, Amy, Cream, Cosmo and the Chaotix found a Chaos Emerald in the volcano and brave lil' Cosmo helped me to retrieve it since mah arm didn't extend far enough to reach it. The emerald was making Mount Adabat more active then usual so it was a good thing we removed the emerald before Mount Adabat got worse."

"That's some bloomin' power coming from such a little emerald." said Geoffrey "How are those emeralds so powerful?"

"Ah guess there's something about the Chaos Emeralds we dun

know about." thought Bunnie, lying back on her back "But ah bet Knuckles knows how the emeralds are powerful since he knows a lot about them."

Geoffrey took a sneaky glance at Bunnie Rabbot while she relaxed on the deckchair beside him. Had he only just realized how beautiful she looked? Maybe he was just so busy fighting for the Kingdom of Acorn he hadn't had time to admire Bunnie's beauty. The only thing ruining the rabbit's beauty were her robot parts but he knew that it wasn't Bunnie's fault she had them, it was Dr. Eggman, the one who tried to roboticize her in the first place. And even though they were able to de-roboticize people thanks to Tails stealing Eggman's portable roboticizer robot***** and giving it to the researchers to use, Bunnie insisted she kept her robot parts since she was strong enough to match many of Eggman's robots as well as fly and shoot things and de-roboticizing her would just end up making her redundant and useless. Regardless, Bunnie, in Geoffrey's eyes, was the most beautiful Mobian on Mobius, even with the robot parts and he'd longed to admit his true feelings to Bunnie but he always felt like she was interested in someone else or not interested in love at all and he didn't really feel like asking so he felt it was better to stay friends then take a risk and end up getting his heart broken. Still, spending a day-off with Bunnie was better then nothing and Geoffrey was enjoying her company. He couldn't wait for the next time he and Bunnie went into battle and then the two of them could kick some butt together once again.

"Hey sugah is there something on your mind?" asked Bunnie gently.

Geoffrey was so startled he almost leaped out of the deckchair and into the umbrella above him. He sat up quickly and looked at Bunnie.

"Y' what?" he asked.

"Ah was wondering if you had something on your mind." said Bunnie "Ya'll seemed a million miles away a moment ago."

"Oh I was just thinking about Sonic and the others and what they're doing right now." lied Geoffrey, trying to hide his embarrassment.

"Oh, ya'll are thinkin' about the sugah-hog." chuckled Bunnie "Ah'm sure he's doin' fine right now. After all, he can take care of himself and no Eggman robot can take him down."

"You know next time we get a day-off, do you think we should try Chun-Nan?" wondered Geoffrey "I bet Chun-Nan's a nice place if that's where Sonic's spending his day-off."

"Well Geoff, next time we get a day-off we'll have a tour of Chun-Nan." said Bunnie "Ah can't wait to hear what Sonic and his friends have to say about it."

While Bunnie and Geoffrey were talking, a silver robot shaped like a rabbit stood on the pier above the beach and surveyed its surroundings. This was a roboticized Mobian rabbit or Robian for short and it appeared to be spying on the beach and making sure there weren't any threats inbound. It peered down at the beach and it spotted Geoffrey and Bunnie sitting on the deckchairs under an umbrella and soaking up the sun's rays. It's piercing red optics extended out of their sockets like telescopes and they fixed themselves on Geoffrey and Bunnie. It appeared to be taking an interest in them. Its optics were glued to the skunk and rabbit and it raised its mechanical ears to try and listen to what they were saying but it was too far away to hear them. Nevertheless, it kept it's optics on Bunnie and Geoffrey and it stood there, still as a statue, watching them like an eagle.

"Mas-ter." it droned in a deep, ominous robot voice "The-Rab-bot-you-have-wait-ed-for-has-a-rrived-at-long-last."

"Has she? How delightful." purred a pompous British gentleman kind of voice from a communicator behind the Robian's ear "Take a gang of Robians to bring her to me but don't harm her. I mean it!"

"I-o-bey." droned the Robian rabbit.

It switched it's communicator off and continued to watch, waiting for the right moment to get back-up.

Meanwhile, Geoffrey had decided to get himself and Bunnie an ice-cream each so he stood up from his deckchair and wondered

through the sandy beach to find the ice-cream cart he and Bunnie had seen shortly after arriving. The moment he passed the pier, he caught sight of the watching Robian in the corner of his eye and he looked up to see it. The Robian flinched, startled it had been found out so it stopped watching Geoffrey and it ran off as fast as it could go. Geoffrey put a finger to his chin and wondered what the Robian was doing up there.

"Hmm…I bet that blighter Dr. Eggman's plotting to attack us while we're unaware of it!" he concluded to himself "Well, it's time we taught that fat moron what happens when he comes butting in on our day-off!"

Geoffrey climbed up the huge wooden pier to catch the Robian, even though he had a feeling it had long gone by now. Bunnie stood up from her deckchair and raised her sunhat to see Geoffrey climbing up the pier. She pulled a face and wondered what the skunk was doing. Bunnie activated the jets in her robot feet and she flew up to the pier just as Geoffrey had finished climbing it. She landed on the pier in front of Geoffrey, making the skunk jump and almost fall off the pier.

"Hey Geoff, what are ya'll doin'?" asked Bunnie "The ice cream cart ain't up here."

"I saw a Robian rabbit standing on the pier and spying on us." said Geoffrey "So I decided to catch the bloke and find out what it's here for."

"Ah bet Dr. Eggman's behind this." said Bunnie "Well, no way are we lettin' that Eggman spoil our day! Let's find that Robian and smash it!"

"Bunnie, need I remind you that Robians are Mobian blokes trapped in a metal shell?" noted Geoffrey "If you smash the bloke, you'll kill an innocent little Mobian that got converted by Eggman."

"Oh, of course." said Bunnie, putting her hand on her head and changing her expression "Ah forgot about that. Sorry."

"No need to be luv." said Geoffrey "Sometimes I forget they're

Mobians in a metal shell. Robians do look awfully robot like don't they?"

"So, where's the Robian?" asked Bunnie, looking left and right.

"The blighter must have hopped off when it saw me looking up at it." said Geoffrey grimly "There's no telling where the damn thing is now."

"Ah have a sneaky feeling it's gone that way." said Bunnie, pointing to the left "Ah'll look down there and ya'll look anywhere else."

"OK then." said Geoff, loading his crossbow "You be careful Bunnie, there's no telling where the Robian is and when it'll pop out of nowhere."

"Oh Geoff, ah'll be fine, don't you worry none about me." Bunnie assured the skunk "After all, ah'm one of the strongest fighters in the service."

She flexed her metal left arm, the one thing that made her one of the most powerful Mobians ever. Geoffrey smiled at Bunnie, any Robian messing with Bunnie would have an unfortunate confrontation with her robot arm, a very unfortunate confrontation indeed.

"Heh, all right then." smirked Geoffrey "See ya later luv."

Bunnie and Geoffrey both set down the road of the village that stood above the beaches of Adabat. Bunnie set down left and Geoffrey went up hill and round a curve in the road. Bunnie looked over her shoulder only to see she was alone on the road and she continued down it, keeping her eyes peeled for any sign of danger.

"Why did a darn Robian have to nosey in on our day-off?" moaned Bunnie "It seems even on a day-off, ah can't get any peace around here."

Bunnie walked further and further down the road until she had been through the village and now she was walking across the pavement which had a fence going down the left side and a wall going down the right side. On the other side of the fence was a very rocky section of the beach that would be perfect for any rock-hoppers that

would love to hop on a rock or two. Bunnie looked around to see that she was still alone. She then looked out to sea to see Mount Adabat in all it's glory, standing proudly a good distance away from the beach and looking proud and mighty indeed. The volcano made Bunnie think of the first visit to Adabat and the Chaos Emerald they had found in the volcano. Shame Eggman had stolen it off them shortly after they had taken it out of Mount Adabat but they had retrieved it later and Sonic had sent them all to Angel Island after defeating Charcaronda****** so the Chaos Emeralds were in good hands. Bunnie then began to wonder, what would a Robian be doing here and what for? Was it a spy for Eggman and it was going to tell Eggman where she and Geoffrey were and therefore, he could strike while they were unprepared? That seemed like the likeliest theory but Bunnie had no way of knowing until she found the Robian. Then suddenly, Bunnie's long ears picked up a sound on the other side of the road. It wasn't a loud sound; it was a quiet sound as if someone had gently scraped a foot across the pavement or on the wall when trying to climb over it. Bunnie stood in a battle ready stance and looked around.

"Who's there?" she asked "Show yourself or ah'll have to blast ya'll to bits!"

The moment Bunnie finished her sentence; something popped its head over the stone wall on the right side of the road and hopped over it. Bunnie deployed her arm cannon and pointed it at the thing. The thing was a silver Robian rabbit, the same one that Geoffrey had spotted earlier on the pier. The Robian raised its arms to lead Bunnie under the pretence that it had surrendered. Bunnie slowly walked up to the Robian, keeping her senses alert to make sure it wasn't attempting to ambush her.

"What are ya'll doin' here?" she demanded "Are ya'll spyin' on us for Dr. Eggman?"

"Neg-a-tive." droned the Robian "We-are-not-pro-grammed-to-serve-Dr-Eggman. We-serve-a-man-named-Ravage-Blood-fang-and-he-demands-to-see-you-now."

Bunnie's ears pricked up and she blanked out for a second. Ravage Bloodfang? That name sounded familiar all of the sudden. But why?

Regardless, Bunnie knew she couldn't trust a Robian so she kept her arm cannon pointed at the Robian bunny.

"As if ah'm gonna believe that!" she said hotly "Tell me the truth or ya'll will get a face full of lasers!"

"I-am-speak-ing-the-truth-Bunnie-Rab-bot." droned the Robian "I-do-not-serve-Dr.-Eggman."

"How do ya'll know mah name?" demanded Bunnie, itching to shoot the Robian.

"Don't-you-re-mem-ber-me?" asked the Robian, lowering its arms "I-am-Gil-bert-the-Rab-bit, mem-ber-of-the-Peace-Gatherers. A-group-you-were-once-part-of-Bunnie."

Bunnie stared at the Robian again. Gilbert the Rabbit? Peace Gatherers? Why was all this sounding familiar to her? Was Gilbert some long lost friend from childhood or something? Bunnie shook her head, the Robian was obviously trying to trick her by toying with her mind. She pointed the arm cannon at the Robian supposedly named Gilbert's head and Gilbert raised his mechanical arms again.

"Stop messin' with me mister and tell me the truth!" she yelled "This is mah last warning! If ya'll don't tell me the truth ah'll blast ya'll to bits!"

"Since-you-do-not-believe-me-and-you-do-not-want-to-meet-with-my-terms-then-we-will-have-to-force-you-to-come-with-us." droned Gilbert coldly "Robians-seize-her!"

Before Bunnie could wonder what Gilbert was talking about, a large group of Robian hopped over the stone wall and they surrounded Bunnie. The Robians were all various creatures consisting of iguanas, cheetahs, moles, hawks and rabbits and they looked vicious and deadly to say the least. Bunnie stared at them all and blanked out again. This sudden group was looking familiar to her but she couldn't quite work out why. But a Robian was a Robian so Bunnie had to smash their heads in and fly away before they could capture her.

"Ya'll are gonna regret messin' with me!" warned Bunnie "Now ya'll are gonna get a taste of mah robot arm!"

Two Robian iguanas made the first move by leaping on Bunnie and pushing her down onto the ground. Bunnie effortlessly pushed them both off and leaped back onto her feet. One iguana smacked Bunnie in the back with its metal tail and Bunnie fell onto her knees. The other iguana tried to conk her on the head with its tail but Bunnie grabbed it and swung it onto the first Robian iguana. The two Robians lay in a heap on the road. Bunnie tried to fly away before the other Robians could leap on her but she didn't get very far. A Robian hawk flew after her and charged into her like a whizzing arrow. Bunnie was struck from behind by the hawk and she was sent spiralling through the air like a dizzy bird. Bunnie regained her balance and she blasted the hawk with her arm cannon. The hawk wasn't destroyed luckily but it was sent falling to the ground with a crash. That one blast seemed to have put the Robian out of commission as its optics faded into black. Bunnie tried to fly away again but a Robian cheetah had climbed up the wall and leaped at her and cheetahs are good at pouncing so the cheetah managed to grab Bunnie and bring her falling down to the ground. They landed near the fence and Bunnie kicked the cheetah over the fence and onto the rock pile on the other side. The cheetah damaged its head and it passed out because of it. Four Robian moles tried to attack Bunnie with their sharp claws but Bunnie had no trouble dealing with them. She punched the first mole away, then she kicked the second away and the third tried to slash at her but it missed and she elbow-thrust it on the head, slamming it into the ground. The fourth mole tunnelled underground but Bunnie had spotted it and she flew off the road and waited for the mole to emerge from underground. The mole burst its way through the tarmac the road was made of, only to find Bunnie wasn't there like it had hoped she would be. Bunnie then kick-slammed it from behind and knocked it onto its front. A Robian rabbit that was larger then Gilbert bounced up to Bunnie and kicked her in the stomach in a natural rabbit fashion. Bunnie recovered from the blow and began shooting the rabbit but the rabbit defended itself with its ears, blocking each blow Bunnie fired. Bunnie realized her cannon wasn't going to work so she extended her robot arm and punched the rabbit in the face. The rabbit landed on its back with a thunk. Gilbert then decided to attack by bouncing up to Bunnie and

kicking her in the head. Bunnie landed on her back but before she could even get back up, Gilbert landed on top of her and pinned her head down with his foot. Bunnie tried to seize him with her robot arm but Gilbert grabbed it and then gave her a painful EMP shock with his metal hands. The shock pulsed through Bunnie's cyborg body and it ended up knocking her out cold. Gilbert dusted his hands off and bounded off Bunnie.

"I-can-see-why-Rav-age-wants-this-one." he droned to his comrades "She-is-a-very-tough-fighter-isn't-she?"

"Well-now-we-have-her-we-can-take-her-to-Rav-age-as-in-struct-ted." droned a Robian cheetah that had a more female sounding voice then the others.

But before anyone could do anything with Bunnie, Geoffrey St. John appeared from around the bend further up the road and began firing darts at the Robians. Geoffrey had given up on his search further up the village so he had decided to find Bunnie and recruit with her and he had heard her fighting with the Robians so he ran as fast as he could to help her. He wasn't pleased to see Bunnie had been knocked out and because of this, he was firing his darts rapidly in rage and he managed to hit several Robians with his onslaught of darts. Gilbert scooped Bunnie up bridal style and hopped off with her.

"Keep-the-skunk-busy-while-I-es-cape." he said "Fight-him-un-til-he-su-ren-ders-but-do-not-kill-him."

"We-o-bey." droned the Robians.

They bared their metal claws and glared at Geoffrey with their red optics. Geoffrey stopped firing darts and he leaped into the air. He landed on the ground, rolled over, got back onto his feet and then socked a Robian cheetah right in the jaw.

"I'll teach you to kidnap one of my best mates you metal jerk!" he yelled, punching the cheetah repeatedly in the jaw.

He was punching the cheetah so hard its jaw almost came off. The two Robian iguanas from earlier had recovered from Bunnie's attack

and they creped up on Geoffrey like sinister gargoyles. Geoffrey pushed the cheetah and turned his head to see the iguanas behind him and before they could attack, he kicked one of them in the jaw. The other one slashed Geoffrey across the cheek, leaving three thin cuts and then it tail-whipped him in the legs, taking them out from beneath him and bringing him crashing onto the ground. Geoffrey tried to get back up but the iguanas placed a foot on each of his arms, pinning him down and keeping him there. Geoffrey pulled on his arms but he couldn't get free, the Robian iguanas were too strong for him. One of the Robian rabbits stood forward and spoke to the iguanas.

"Toss-him-in-to-the-sea." it ordered "That-will-keep-him-at-bay-long-enough-for-us-to-get-away."

"We-o-bey." droned the iguanas.

They released Geoffrey's arms and then they grabbed them again with their hands. Being robots, the iguanas were capable of throwing things much further then the average Mobian so they could easily throw Geoffrey over all the rocks and into the sea. Geoffrey squirmed in their grasp but he couldn't get loose, they were just too strong for someone as strong as Geoffrey. Then suddenly, before the iguanas could do anything, they were blasted in the face by some green blobs of concentrated energy. They dropped Geoffrey and shut down, collapsing onto the ground after they did so. Geoffrey picked himself up and turned around to see two new individuals taking on the Robian gang. One was a male lynx with black spiky hair, a black stripe going across his left eye yellow gloves with a green triangle on them, blue shorts with yellow stripes on the side of the legs and a pair of sandals. The other was a female cougar with long flowing orange hair, purple fingerless gloves with a green triangle on them, a purple bra, purple shorts and a pair of sandals. They both had concentrated energy flowing around their hands and they were using it to great effect. The lynx punched a Robian mole in the face, knocking it clean out and the cougar fired to energy spears at two Robian cheetahs. The cheetahs were taken out in an instant. The other Robians quickly decided now was a good time to beat a hasty retreat. They ran for it before the attackers could attack them again. The lynx's hands stopped glowing with

energy and he laughed at the retreating Robians.

"Ha! The ol' energy fist gets them every time!" he crowed, his voice was very teenage sounding, suggesting he was a young fighter "I dunno why those dumb Robians keep trying! We always win in the end!"

"One thing I'd like to know is what they were doing this time?" thought the cougar, her voice was teenage sounding too "Were they attacking some innocents again?"

"Seems like it." said the lynx, pointing at Geoffrey "There's a skunk guy here looking a little beat up."

The lynx and the cougar ran up to Geoffrey to see if he was alright.

"Are you hurt sir?" asked the cougar "Oh my gosh! Look at your cheek! Those Robians scratch really hard don't they? Does it hurt? Are you OK?"

"I'm fine luv." Geoffrey insisted "Stop worrying about me lass. I've been in tougher situations then this before."

"Sorry, I'm very passionate about people's well being." said the cougar.

"I can see that." said Geoffrey "Well, thanks for saving my neck out there you two. You're quite the fighters I can see."

"You're welcome skunk boy." said the lynx "And yes, we are "quite the fighters" as you can see. We've been fighting those Robians for weeks and they just don't stop coming back. Oh I rue the day that freak Dr. Eggman ever invaded our planet!"

"I second that." said Geoffrey "By the way, the name's Geoffrey St. John of the Royal Fighters Service in Mobotropolis. Nice to meet you blokes."

"You're a Royal Fighter?" piped the lynx "Cool! We've heard a lot about you guys and we're hoping to become one of you!"

"You are?" said Geoffrey, pleased to see that the Royal Fighters

Service was inspiring some young minds abroad.

"You've got that correct." said the lynx "We've been training in fighting for days and now we can fight off Robians by ourselves."

"I can see from the performance you did earlier." said Geoffrey "Now, what are your names?"

"I'm Scott and this is my girlfriend Jessica." introduced the lynx "We've been friends since childhood."

"What are you doing in Adabat Mr. St. John?" asked Jessica.

"Me and Bunnie Rabbot have a day-off and we're spending it here in Adabat but those Robians decided to ruin everything and kidnap her." explained Geoffrey "Care to help?"

"Sure." said Jessica "I just hope you and Bunnie will be willing to help us in return."

"We don't need help Jessie!" hissed Scott "We're quite capable of fighting him in our own!"

"No we aren't dummy!" Jessica hissed back "He can fight both of us to a stand still and without breaking a sweat! We need help and we need it fast!"

"Help? What do you blokes need help for?" asked Geoffrey "And who are you talking about?"

Scott and Jessica stopped talking quietly to each other and Scott spoke with a grim look on his face.

"Ravage Bloodfang." he said slowly "He's the enemy of Adabat and the one we strive to defeat."

Bunnie Rabbot woke up from her knock-out moment only to find she was no longer outside in Adabat's sunny weather. Instead, she was in a dark room with little features and her arm and legs were restrained by laser cuffs just a few inches above the floor. Her arms

and legs were spread out, making Bunnie into an X shape. Bunnie didn't take long to realize she was in trouble so she pulled on her arms and legs but not even someone as strong as Bunnie Rabbot could get free from laser cuffs, the only cuffs that could never be broken. Bunnie was not about to let herself be a prisoner though so she struggled and pulled, moaning loudly as she did so. Gilbert the Robian Rabbit was the only person in the cell with her and he was watching her struggle with his red optics.

"It-is-in-ad-vis-a-ble-to-strug-gle." he droned "You-are-just-wast-ing-your-own-strength-Bunnie-Rab-bot."

"Ugh!" moaned Bunnie as she finally gave up struggling "Gilbert, ya'll let me go right now! I have some friends that will be mighty angry with ya'll for darin' to kidnap me!"

"If-you-had-just-de-cid-ed-to-come-with-us-in-the-first-place-you-would-not-be-in-this-con-dit-ion-Bunnie." droned Gilbert flatly "Now-do-me-a-fav-our-and-keep-quiet-until-Rav-age-arrives."

"Ah will not keep quiet!" snapped Bunnie "And you can tell your boss that ah'm dyin' to punch him with mah robot arm!"

"What's going on in here Gilbert?" came a pompous gentleman like voice with a British accent from the doorway of the cell.

Bunnie's ears pricked up. That voice sounded familiar. Had she heard it before? Then suddenly, something strode into the cell and stood beside Gilbert, glaring at him with his steely yellow eyes. Bunnie stared at the figure. The figure was a male Mobian wolf with grey fur. He wore a wolf's skull over his head as a mask, presumably to hide something embarrassing or shameful and he wore a golden bodysuit with a grey belt, knee spikes, elbow spikes and grey gloves with stripes on them. He had black footwear on and he wore a crimson red cape that was black on the inside, had darker red shoulder pieces and it dragged on the floor behind him. The cape was held together by a chain and he also wore a grey and black chest plate. The wolf looked like a very intimidating figure and Bunnie immediately assumed he was the Robian's boss. But something about the wolf looked familiar to her. She had a strange feeling in her gut that she had seen the wolf before, only without the

skull mask. The wolf looked up at Bunnie, with a softer expression and then turned back to Gilbert, glaring at him again.

"Rav-age-sir." said Gilbert with a salute "I-have-cap-tured-the-Rab-bot-as-ins-truc-ted."

"You clunking chrome klutz!" yelled the wolf, smacking Gilbert in the face with a clawed hand "I told you to bring her to me not lock her up like a wild animal! Release her this minute!"

"I-o-bey." droned Gilbert.

Bunnie stared at the wolf in wonder. Why was he telling Gilbert to let her go? And what did he want with her? Gilbert pressed a button on the key pad and Bunnie's laser cuffs switched off. Bunnie dropped down onto the floor and she picked herself up. She dusted herself off and rubbed her right wrist, which was organic, better.

"So sorry about that child, my Robians get carried away in their assignments." said the wolf, glaring angrily at Gilbert who recoiled in fright.

"Ah understand sir." said Bunnie "Thanks for letting me go. So, who are you and what do ya'll want me for?"

"Huh, I leave for a good few years and you forget all about me Bunnie." muttered the wolf in a fake sad tone "I am Ravage Bloodfang. Former member of the Peace Gathering group we once had here."

Bunnie blanked out again. Memories from childhood were beginning to leap back into her head like a bunch of rabbits. Her mind clicked and she finally found out why all this was looking familiar to her.

"Of course!" she cried "The Peace Gatherers! Ah remember now! Me and mah family joined a group of peace-lovers in Adabat and we would often gather around in Adabat and have some fun while discussing peaceful methods for Mobius!"

"So you haven't forgotten after all Bunnie." chuckled Ravage happily "How splendid. If you come this way with me child, I shall explain why we want you and some other things."

Since Bunnie knew she was with an old friend, she knew she could trust him so she followed Ravage who was walking out of the cell and going down a corridor. He opened a door and led Bunnie into a room which had a much more inviting look then the cell she was in a moment ago. They were in a laboratory which had a giant computer monitor hanging on the wall above anyone in it. All the Robians she had been fighting before were there but this time, they didn't have any intentions to hurt her. They all stood to attention as Ravage led Bunnie to a table with two chairs. They both sat down at the table and Ravage spoke.

"So Bunnie, how's things been doing since the Peace Gatherers disbanded?" he asked.

"Not too bad." said Bunnie "Ah've been coping well and mah daddy helped raise me after mah mother died and ah've joined the Royal Fighters Service. Ya'll heard of it?"

"I have indeed child." said Ravage with a big smile on his face "The Royal Fighters are the ones fighting that fiend Dr. Eggman aren't they?"

"They are." said Bunnie "And we always manage to come out on top in the end of our conflicts. All the credit goes to Sonic the Hedgehog, the hero of Mobius and the reason we're all fighting for Mobius' freedom."

"That Sonic is a marvellous character isn't he?" said Ravage "Faster then the speed of sound and unrivalled in speed by anybody. If only he was here to help us poor Adabat folk."

"Adabat doesn't need help." said Bunnie "Everything's alright here."

"Not everything." noted Ravage "We have innocent lives waiting to be de-roboticized here as you can see and I've been trying as hard as I can to de-roboticize these people but I've been completely unsuccessful. These poor folk are doomed to be robots forever."

"If you can't de-roboticize them then how come they work for you Ravage?" asked Bunnie.

"I caught them with my bare hands and installed a chip in their minds that allows me to have total control over them." explained Ravage "Unfortunately, that means the poor Robians aren't sentient and they have to obey me all the time. Still better then leaving them to serve Dr. Eggman isn't it?"

"Ah guess so." said Bunnie "And there's something familiar about those particular Robians you have."

"You're right on that dear." said Ravage "They're all members of the Peace Gatherers."

"Oh mah stars!" shrieked Bunnie, her ears sticking up straight in shock "Those poor fellas are our friends from the Peace Gatherers?"

"Correct." said Ravage "That's why I'm so desperate to free those souls from their robot cages, I want to reunite the group and try to find a way to bring peace back to Mobius."

"But we disbanded." pointed out Bunnie "After mah mother died of natural causes, daddy decided it would be disrespectful to continue without her since she was the heart and soul of the group so we disbanded and we haven't seen each other since."

"Of course." said Ravage "The group just wouldn't work without her. Your mother was a wonderful creature. If only she was still here now. She would be very helpful to us."

"Ah miss her too." said Bunnie, wiping a tear away from her eye "And daddy misses her too. But that didn't stop him from raising me up into the young woman I am now. Ah'm not sure what daddy would think to mah robot parts though. Ah don't think he'd like them."

He showed Ravage her robot arm and robot legs to which Ravage stared at but showed no surprise since he'd already seen them.

"How did you get those anyway?" he asked "Did Dr. Eggman try to roboticize you but he failed halfway into the process?"

"Well he did try to roboticize me." said Bunnie "But ah was saved by a man named Geoffrey St. John. He's a Royal Fighter and one of

mah best friends. Ah've been grateful to the little skunk since the day he saved me from total roboticization."

"If only the rest of the Peace Gatherers had your luck child." said Ravage "Then I wouldn't need to try and de-roboticize them."

"By the way, how have you been since the Peace Gatherers disbanded?" asked Bunnie "And what's with the addition of the skull mask? Ah don't remember ya'll wearin' that."

Ravage looked a little sad but he answered Bunnie anyway.

"After the group disbanded, I decided to leave Adabat." said Ravage "I wanted to go sight-seeing so I travelled around Mobius to see what the other countries were like. I had some accidents though."

He undid the strap at the back of his mask and took it off his head, revealing his face which was laden with hideous permanent scars that would never heal. Bunnie gasped in shock at what Ravage was showing her. The wolf really hadn't been very careful on his journey had he?

"That's why I wear the mask." he said, putting it back on and strapping it up "It's to hide my scars as they don't give me much pleasure and I cannot bear to show my face to anyone again."

"Ah see." said Bunnie "So, now we've answered all these questions, can ya'll tell me why ya'll want me?"

"Certainly Bunnie." said Ravage "Even though I have been unsuccessful in de-roboticizing our friends, I have one thought that might work. Have you ever heard of the Sceptre of Fates at all?"

"No." said Bunnie "What's that?"

"It's a powerful weapon used by the Royals of Adabat centuries ago." explained Ravage "I read all about the sceptre in a book. It's said that its magic can bring good fortune or bad fortune depending on the wielder. If good people use it, they can make good things happen with the sceptre but if bad people use it, they can make bad things happen with it. The Royals thought that such a powerful weapon shouldn't be misused by anybody and they didn't want to

destroy it in case they needed it as a last minute resort so they sealed it away in Mount Adabat. Unfortunately, a few days before Eggman invaded Mobius, thieves found out where the sceptre was hidden so they blew a hole in the mountain and swiped the weapon from its hiding place. They were caught and the weapon was hidden again. I have no idea where it could possibly be though."

"So how do ah fit into all this?" asked Bunnie.

"You're a good finder." said Ravage "And I'm a weak and feeble person now so I won't have the strength to go on a search like that. I need a young pair of legs and a strong back to help me find such a powerful weapon and you're a powerful person so you'll be perfect."

"But, if the sceptre was hidden for safety reasons, wouldn't digging it up be kinda, um, treasonous?" asked Bunnie worriedly.

"Once we show the royals how effective its good power can be, they'll worship us!" claimed Ravage, leaping up from his chair "They'll feel like total idiots for not using the weapon when they had the chance and when they see what good we can do with it, we'll be heroes and everybody will adore us for our efforts!"

"Um…ah dunno. It sounds kinda risky…" mused Bunnie.

"Oh Bunnie, you've been in riskier situations then this haven't you?" purred Ravage, putting an arm around Bunnie and flashing a toothy grin that could make a crocodile nervous "Finding a mere sceptre should just be a walk in the park for you. And once you find it, we can use its power for good and hopefully…" he paused for dramatic effect "…destroy Dr. Eggman and his robot armies once and for all."

Bunnie thought for a moment. All this did seem like a good idea and if the sceptre was as powerful as Ravage made it out to be, then they could stop Eggman once and for all and Mobius would be free once again.

"Alright then old friend, ah'll help ya'll find it." said Bunnie.

"Excellent child!" cried Ravage "I knew I could count on your keen young mind to make the right choice!"

"But how do we find this sceptre?" asked Bunnie.

"I have made this." said Ravage, pulling something out of a pocket in his big flowing cape "It's an energy detector and it is programmed to detect high levels of concentrated energy. I can't guarantee we'll find the sceptre straight away though, we might accidentally find something else that's full of energy."

"So now we know how to find it, we can go and find it." said Bunnie "When shall we start?"

"Right now." said Ravage "Let's go Bunnie. Our victory over Eggman awaits us!"

And with that, Ravage and Bunnie left the room, ready to search for the mysterious Sceptre of Fates. This was going to be a long search but Bunnie knew that she would be able to find it, after all she was a good finder like Ravage had said so the sceptre would be as good as found with her using the energy detector…

"Who's Ravage Bloodfang then you two?" asked Geoffrey "An enemy of yours?"

"Too right." said Scott with a frown "He's our arch-enemy like Dr. Eggman's Sonic's arch-enemy! He's always coming out of nowhere and attacking innocents on the street or sending his own gang of Robians, which I wonder as to how he even got them, to pillage people's houses!"

"Ravage is a menace and a fiend." said Jessica "And me and Scott wish nothing more then to kick him out of Adabat for good. It's just a pity he didn't stay out of Adabat when he was kicked out the first time?"

"Kicked out?" asked Geoffrey "You mean the bloke's an exile?"

"Yes." said Jessica "When me and Scott were only six year olds, Ravage led a raid on Mount Adabat, the local volcano you've probably seen already. He and two men blew a hole in the mountain and stole the Sceptre of Fates, a weapon that had been sealed in

the mountain for centuries."

"What's the Sceptre of Fates?" asked Geoffrey.

"A powerful weapon used by the Ancient Royals of Adabat eons ago." explained Jessica "It's power is legendary and depending on the user, can make bad or good things happen. The royals were aware of how powerful it was and feared it would start a war between the bad and the good for its power so they sealed the sceptre in Mount Adabat where it has remained for centuries. But then Ravage and two men found out where it was and tried to steal it."

"When Ravage stole the sceptre, he and his men sailed back to shore on a rowing boat where police were waiting for them." said Scott, continuing for Jessica "Me and Jessica were on the beach at the time and we witnessed the cops fighting Ravage in an attempt to arrest him. Ravage dropped the sceptre and me and Jessica were fascinated by it's appearance so we crept up to it and touched it. The moment we touched it, the sceptre glowed very brightly and then gave us our energy powers which we use to fight with."

"You see the triangles on our gloves?" said Jessica, pointing to the triangle on the back of her hand "That's the sceptre's mark and once you have this mark, you will have whatever power the sceptre gives you."

"Crikey." said Geoffrey, impressed at the tale he was hearing "That sceptre sounds like an amazing weapon."

"Yeah." said Scott "But as amazing as our powers are, I feel cursed at the same time. Ever since we got our powers, people tormented me and Jessica because we were different and we were a victim of bullying since they had the wrong idea that we wanted to use our powers to beat them up with."

He finished the sentence with a sad face and he put his hand to his face as it he was trying to stop himself from crying.

"We were emotionally scared for life by those dreadful people and we ended up wishing we could get rid of our powers." continued

Jessica "But we couldn't, our powers our a permanent gift bestowed by the sceptre itself so we decided to live with our powers and put up with the teasing and bullying."

"If I were in your shoes, I would have taught them blokes a lesson or two." said Geoffrey, feeling sorry for the lynx and cougar "No one blinkin' torments people who are different! Just because you two have powers it doesn't mean you're weird or anything. No one says a thing about Sonic and his blinkin' super speed so you shouldn't let torments like that bother you two!"

"We tried but we just couldn't help but let it get to us." said Scott sadly "We were so sick of the tormenting we left the village we once lived in and decided to live in a lonely little stilt house on the outskirts of the village. The village that's around the bend from we are now doesn't seem to have a problem with us and our powers so we've come accustomed to life here. And this village has especially come to love us for our heroic attempts to defeat Ravage."

"Moving back on to Ravage, what happened after his raid failed?" asked Geoffrey.

"He was taken to court and put on trial." explained Jessica "They sentenced him to exile and as punishment, they tortured him and left him permanent scars on his face as punishment for his crimes. You see, it was made law by the Ancient Royals who sealed the sceptre away that no one is to use the Sceptre of Fates, no matter what purpose you wish to use it for and since Ravage tried to defy that rule, he was banished for it."

"So Ravage got banished because he tried to use the Sceptre of Fates even though it's against the law to use it." said Geoffrey, recapping on what he was just told "I've got all that now mates. But Ravage is still being a problem for Adabat. Did he come back from exile like?"

"Unfortunately yes." said Scott "Last month, Ravage came back and took control of a bunch of Robians and he keeps trying to find the Sceptre of Fates. It's not hidden in Mount Adabat anymore since the current rulers of Adabat have re-located it so he can't find it and yet he keeps trying."

"Do you know where it is mate?" asked Geoffrey.

"No." said Scott "And neither does Jessica. No one knows where the sceptre has been re-located. It was hidden in secret so no one would be able to find out where it is and despite all this, Ravage keeps trying to find it."

"Me and Scott keeping fighting him and pushing him back to his secret hideout but no matter how hard we try, he keeps coming back for more." said Jessica "Despite our powers, he's too strong for us."

"So that's why you want my help then." said Geoffrey "You think I may be able to take out that Ravage bloke for you."

"Well I didn't think we needed help." said Scott, fuming "I bet if we keep on fighting, we'll defeat him eventually."

"We can't defeat him Scott you stubborn little idiot!" snapped Jessica "We need help and help is what we're getting!"

"Fine." huffed Scott, turning his back on his girlfriend and grumbling quietly to himself.

"So, will you help us defeat Ravage and save Adabat Mr. St. John?" asked Jessica, clasping her hands together hopefully.

"I will mates on one condition." said Geoffrey "If you help me rescue Bunnie Rabbot first. She'll be able to help us defeat Ravage. Bunnie is a very strong woman and that Ravage bloke will be no match for her and her robotic limbs."

"You have a deal." said Jessica "And luckily for you, we know where Ravage is hiding and where Ravage is hiding is likely where we'll find Bunnie Rabbot."

"Crikey." said Geoffrey "Well then, show me the way you two and then we can rescue her!"

Scott and Jessica ran off with Geoffrey running after them. As they ran down the road, Geoffrey had many thoughts circling in his head. Sceptre of Fates. Ravage Bloodfang. Where was the sceptre? Is Ravage as deadly as he is assumed to be? And what does he want

Bunnie Rabbot for? Is Bunnie OK? And what is Ravage planning to do with the sceptre? Geoffrey had no idea but he knew he would find out the moment he met Ravage and beat him into a pulp. Pity his and Bunnie's day-off was ruined but Geoffrey liked adventures and fighting bad-guys so this more then made up for it. Geoffrey just hoped this wouldn't be a day he'd long to forget…

Footnotes:

*** See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Stories 52-56 for the whole saga!**

**** For details, see *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 40**

***** As remembered in *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 1**

****** See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 41**

******* See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 13**

******** See the epic *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 45**

Mysteries arise as the search for the Sceptre of Fates begins! Is Ravage as evil as Scott and Jessica make him out as? Is Bunnie being deceived? And what does Ravage want with the sceptre anyway? Find out as this arc continues next time... Reviews are welcome. Also don't miss all the action going on in* Heroes of Mobius *as Sonic and friends deal with some BIG trouble in little Chun-Nan!

P.S. Ravage Bloodfang is NOT my character! He belongs to my awesome brother who is very creative when it comes to villains and I've use Ravage with his permission so don't accuse me of stealing or else! XD

P.P.S. The whole point of this arc really is to give Bunnie Rabbot some much needed back story as no writer in Sonic history can be bothered to give her one, not even the amazing Ian Flynn who is my hero and all time favourite writer! Is this

back story any good for Bunnie Rabbot? If not, please don't criticize me too much, I'm just doing my best.

P.P.P.S. Don't think I'm planning to pair Bunnie Rabbot and Geoffrey St. John up! They're just going to be close friends, nothing more. Although the pairing WOULD make sense in this continuity given that Geoffrey saved Bunnie from being fully roboticized...

Trouble in Adabat 2

Arc 4: Trouble in Adabat

Takes place during Stories: 52-56

Part 2

A sewer lid on the pavement lifted up and moved to the side as Ravage Bloodfang opened up the entrance to his lair. He shielded his eyes as he stepped out of the darkness of his lair into the bright sunlight of Adabat. Bunnie climbed out after him, holding Ravage's detector device and she closed the sewer lid after herself.

"Eww! Ya'll made your lil' ol hidin' place in a sewer?" said Bunnie in disgust, sticking her tongue out.

"No child, the sewer lid is merely a disguise." corrected Ravage "Anyone walking past my lair will not suspect a thing down there, they'll just think it's a perfectly normal sewer."

"Why do ya'll need to hide yourself?" asked Bunnie suspiciously "Ya'll seem to be awfully secretive right now."

"Sometimes, I want to be alone and the best way to isolate yourself is go in hiding." explained Ravage "It's nice and peaceful when you have a moment to yourself."

"Oh ah see." said Bunnie "So, let's get findin' that lil' ol sceptre shall we?"

"Of course." said Ravage "Lead the way my dear."

Bunnie peered down at the device she held in her hand. It wasn't displaying any finds so far so she had no idea where to start. She didn't feel that she should start in the village since the village wouldn't be a good place to hide a dangerous weapon. She wondered off down the road in no particular direction just to see what she would come across or find. Ravage followed her closely.

The two Mobians walked down the road and disappeared around a bend. The moment they left though, Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica had arrived at Ravage's hiding place. They all got down onto their knees and Scott opened the sewer lid. Geoffrey screwed his face up.

"What blinkin' evil man hides in a sewer?" he sniffed.

"It's not a sewer idiot!" snapped Scott "The sewer lid is there to fool people. What's underneath the sewer lid is more then what it seems."

"I see." said Geoffrey.

So Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica climbed down the ladder, closing the lid after them so Ravage wouldn't suspect anything, and into Ravage's lair. After reaching the bottom, Geoffrey surveyed his surroundings. He, Scott and Jessica were in a dark tunnel that led to some rooms located in the walls.

"So where do you think Ravage will be hiding then?" asked Geoffrey.

"In any of those rooms." said Jessica "Let's try them as we go down the corridors."

So Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica wondered down the corridor and looked through any door they came across. They didn't find Ravage in any of the doors they looked in as they made their way down the corridor. However, as they neared the end of the corridor, Scott opened a door and peered inside. What he found was a laboratory; the place Bunnie and Ravage had been in while talking about the Sceptre of Fates. Scott smiled. This place was important and using the computer monitor, they could find Ravage and stomp all over him.

"Hey Jessica! Geoffrey!" called Scott "I've found a lab!"

"Good finding Scott!" Jessica congratulated, running up to where the lynx in the blue shorts was standing with Geoffrey just behind her "I bet we can find something useful in there."

The three Mobians crept through the door and into the lab. There

was just one problem. It wasn't empty. The lab was full of Robians and they clearly did not seem happy to have intruders in the lab of their master Ravage Bloodfang. Gilbert glared at the intruders with his red optics.

"In-tru-ders!" he yelled "Robians! Get-them-and-des-troy-them!"

The Robians obeyed and they lunged at Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica. Geoffrey was the first to attack by leaping into the air and kicking a Robian cheetah directly in the jaw and sending it hurling backwards. The cheetah landed straight on top of Gilbert, the Robian rabbit yelping in surprise as he was knocked off his feet. Two Robian iguanas tried to attack Scott and Jessica but the lynx and cougar threw some energy blasts at them, striking them and sending them hurling backwards into the wall. Scott summoned some concentrated energy to his hands and he gave a Robian mole an enormous uppercut. The uppercut combined with his energy power made the blow all the more painful for the unfortunate Robian that got punched by the lynx. Two Robian rabbits kicked Jessica in their natural rabbit style but the cougar wasn't too affected. She threw an energy beam at the rabbits but they used their metal ears to shield themselves from the blow. Geoffrey attacked them both from behind with a powerful punch and then he shot a dart each into their necks to put them to sleep. A Robian hawk flew out of nowhere and pile-dived Geoffrey from behind, knocking the skunk onto his stomach. Then the hawk grabbed Scott by his arms, carried him off the floor and flew around the room with the lynx in its razor sharp talons. Scott struggled and squirmed but a robotic hawk has a very firm grasp so Scott just couldn't get free. The hawk then flew down to the floor and let go of Scott, sending him crashing into the floor and skidding across it painfully. That attack had left some nasty scrapes on his face and Scott was ticked off to say the least. Jessica pounced on the hawk from behind but the hawk flew off again, carrying her with it. The hawk flew all around the lab with Jessica clinging for dear life on to its back. Geoffrey tried to help her by firing a dart at the hawk but the hawk was much too fast so the skunk completely missed him. Jessica decided to down the hawk by summoning concentrated energy to her hands and thumping it sharply on its head and back. The hawk screeched a mechanical sounding version of its natural screech as Jessica thumped it ever

so sharply on its head and back. Jessica then pounded the hawk's wing and the roboticized hawk began to plummet down to the ground. Jessica leaped off the hawk before the hawk could crash land and she landed into Scott's arms. The hawk crashed into the floor and skidded across it before coming to a stop against the wall. Geoffrey shot it with a stun-dart before it could get back up and the hawk was put to sleep. Another Robian cheetah tried to pounce on Geoffrey but Geoffrey gave it an uppercut and sent it hurling over his head and crashing onto the floor directly behind him. Then he shot it with another stun-dart and put it to sleep. Scott and Jessica took out two Robian rabbits each and then they both took Gilbert out. Geoffrey shot them all with stun darts to put them to sleep and keep them out of trouble. Now the Robians were defeated, Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica could investigate the lab.

"Now the robo-blighters are in dreamland we can search this joint for Bunnie and Ravage." said Geoffrey "If that scoundrel has done anything to Bunnie I swear I'll knock his blinkin' block off!"

"You really like Bunnie don't you Geoffrey?" asked Jessica.

"I do luv." said Geoffrey "Me and Bunnie are good mates and we were hoping to have a nice relax here until those Robian ninnies ruined everything."

"No wonder you're so keen to find her." said Scott as he was searching around the lab for Ravage.

Geoffrey nodded at the lynx and he wondered around the lab, hoping to find something. The three Mobians had a thorough search of the lab but they couldn't find Ravage or Bunnie anywhere for they had already left earlier. After a few minutes, Geoffrey eventually gave up.

"They ain't here." he grumbled to himself "That Ravage bloke and Bunnie must be somewhere else."

"I bet we'll find them by using that computer monitor." said Jessica, wondering over to the huge monitor that loomed over everybody.

Jessica began to tap a few keys on the computer. She was good

with computers despite the fact Adabat hardly had any and she knew how to work this one easily. She typed on the computer and began leafing through the displays on the huge screen, hoping to find where Ravage and Bunnie where. She taped a key on the keyboard and the screen showed her the ground plan of the entire lair. She began searching through that on the computer only to find no sign of Ravage or Bunnie anywhere.

"According to this, Ravage and Bunnie aren't even in the lab." said Jessica "They must be hiding elsewhere."

"I bet they're outside somewhere." thought Scott "That's it! Ravage must be attempting to find the Sceptre of Fates again and he's probably using Bunnie against her will to help him find it."

"That's preposterous mate, Bunnie's too strong for some wolf in a cape to apprehend." scoffed Geoffrey.

"Well since they're not in the lab, they must be outside." said Jessica "I'll see if I can find them."

She taped some more keys on the keyboard and found Ravage and Bunnie on the screen. The computer had pin-pointed their location to just beyond the village and down a long stretch of road that seemed to go on for a while.

"There they are." said Jessica "Just beyond the village."

"Now we know where they are, let's skedaddle before the creepy, scary Robians wake up." said Scott.

With that said, the skunk, lynx and cougar all ran out of the lab, leaving the powered-down Robians behind. They ran back down the corridor, up the ladder and out of Ravage's lair. They climbed out of the lair and into the blazing hot sunshine outside, closed the lid behind them so Ravage wouldn't suspect anything should he come back at any time, and they ran off down the road in search of Ravage and Bunnie.

"Hang on Bunnie." Geoffrey said to himself "I'm coming…"

Hours ticked slowly by and all Bunnie and Ravage had been doing was going around in circles just trying to find the sceptre. The detector Ravage had built to find the sceptre wasn't being of much use to them since it could only detect objects at a close range and since Bunnie and Ravage had no idea where the sceptre was hiding, they didn't know where to look and where to find it. Looking around in any possible place was the only thing they could do but even that didn't seem to be helping the rabbit and wolf much. After ten minutes of going nowhere, Bunnie slumped on a bench and sighed loudly.

"Ravage, ah'm pooped, ah think we should rest ourselves for a minute." said a very tired Bunnie Rabbot.

"Very well then." said Ravage, sitting beside her "No harm in resting for a few seconds is there?"

So the two Mobians sat on the bench, gazing out to sea and resting their weary bones for a moment.

"Ah really have no clue on how to find this durn sceptre." said Bunnie sadly "This detector isn't of much help to us. Any ideas why?"

"Well when I built it, I made it so it could detect high levels of concentrated energy." explained Ravage "But ONLY at close range. I don't know why I decided to be such a dumbo and do that since it doesn't help us find anything quicker. If only I'd given it some way of pin-pointing the location of anything with high energy levels then we'd be going somewhere. As is, we're just going to have to look as hard as we possibly can my child."

Bunnie nodded and rested her head on her hand. She gazed out into the glorious sea which sparkled like diamonds thanks to the sun's rays shinning off of the gentle water. The sea always looked beautiful on a sunny day. Bunnie then turned to her left and saw Mount Adabat, still in view from where she and Ravage were but a very long way away from where they were. Looking at the semi-active volcano seemed to give Bunnie an idea of some sorts.

"Hmmm…" she thought to herself "What if…"

"Bunnie? What is it dear?" asked Ravage "Got an idea?"

"Ah think so." said Bunnie quietly "What if…the Royals hid the sceptre back in Mount Adabat after they retrieved it from the thieves you spoke about?"

"Hid it back in Mount Adabat?" blurted Ravage "Why ever would the Royals do something so bone idle and ridiculous?"

"Because nobody would expect it." explained Bunnie "Nobody would expect the Royals to he stupid enough to put a powerful weapon in a place it was once in so maybe the Royals pretended to re-locate it when really they hid it in Mount Adabat again so no one would expect to find it there and no one would ever find it ever again."

"Bunnie…that is a brilliant thought!" cried Ravage "It may not be the case but there's no harm in trying. We could always just row over to Mount Adabat and see if the energy detector picks anything up."

"No need to row to the volanco Ravage." said Bunnie brightly "Ah'll fly us over with mah rockets, a gift from mah robot parts."

"Well, looks like Eggman did some good when he half-roboticized you after all." chuckled Ravage "So shall we get going?"

"Whenever ya'll are ready old friend." said Bunnie with a smile.

Ravage leaped to his feet as if he was ready to go. Bunnie stood up from the bench but before anything could happen, Ravage was struck in the face by an energy spear and sent falling onto his side. Bunnie screamed in shock and tried to help the cloaked wolf up. The moment Bunnie helped Ravage stand up though, he was stricken by another energy spear. The spears were both being fired by Scott and Jessica, who had found Ravage and Bunnie at long last and their first response was to attack Ravage before he could do anything. Ravage turned around and roared a very fearsome roar at Scott and Jessica. Scott and Jessica threw more energy spears at Ravage but the caped wolf dodged them with no effort and he snarled at them.

"Ravage, who the hoo-hah are they?" cried Bunnie.

"My mortal enemies!" answered Ravage "They're bothersome little kids who find it funny to pick on the innocent!"

"You're anything but innocent you deceitful wolf!" yelled Jessica, leaping into the air and preparing to give Ravage a black eye "You're a monster and we're going to put you back into exile!"

All this seemed to amaze Bunnie. Exile? What was the cougar talking about? Ravage roared at Jessica and he smacked her before she could even get close to punching him. Jessica landed rather painfully on the ground and she groaned to herself. Scott tried to attack Ravage but Ravage gave the lynx an uppercut that sent him hurling over the fence and onto the sandy beach on the other side of the fence. Scott landed face first in the sand and he grumbled to himself. Ravage growled at him.

"Didn't anyone ever tell you to respect the elderly you wretched children?" he growled.

"Why are they attacking you and why did the cougar girl say she was gonna put you back into exile?" asked Bunnie "What's going on Ravage? Please tell me."

"Those two have the wrong idea about me Bunnie." said Ravage bitterly "They seem to confuse me for some other evil doer and they always attack me. I keep insisting to them I'm a good soul but they won't have it, they just continue to attack me and irk me."

Before Ravage could do anything else, someone grabbed his arm and forced it behind his back, making Ravage grimace in pain. Then the attacker wrapped his other arm around Ravage's neck. It was Geoffrey St. John. Bunnie was pleased to see him but she wasn't pleased to see him attacking and old friend of hers.

"Alright you blighter, you can let Bunnie go and save us all the trouble of having to cave yer skull in or you can get your butt kicked by me!" yelled Geoffrey as he tightened his hold on Ravage.

"Geoffrey! Let him go!" cried Bunnie "Ravage is not a bad guy, he's on our side!"

"He…he is?" said Geoffrey, letting go of Ravage and turning to Bunnie "But Scott and Jessica here," he motioned to the lynx and cougar who had just go back to their feet and were glaring angrily at Ravage ",say he's the enemy of Adabat."

"Enemy of…what?" cried Bunnie "You two, where did ya'll ever get such a horrible idea?"

"From months of fighting him that's what!" retorted Scott, pointing sharply at Bunnie and looking very mad indeed "Ravage is a scoundrel and he's trying to find the Sceptre of Fates and use it for bad purposes! Don't tell me you believe this scum bag is a good guy!"

Bunnie could not believe what she was hearing. Scoundrel? Use the Sceptre of Fates for bad purposes? That did not sound like the Ravage she once knew! Something must be wrong here.

"Ah don't believe you." said Bunnie "Ravage is a friend of mine. Ah first met him when ah was a kid and he's a wonderful guy. He was part of the disbanded Peace Gatherers like ah was and he hasn't got an evil bone in his body. Ya'll must be mistaking poor Ravage for somebody else."

All this did not seem to convince the energy powered lynx at all.

"Ravage, I knew you were evil and sneaky but I didn't know you were a liar!" he yelled at Ravage "I bet you've been telling lies to Bunnie to get her to work for you! You're using her to find the Sceptre of Fates aren't you?"

"What a repulsive idea!" snapped Ravage "I am not lying to Bunnie at all, me and her have known each other for a while and I am not using her to help me find the sceptre, she is helping me find it from the kindness of her heart, something you two scrubs sorely lack!"

"That's it!" yelled Scott "I'm gonna give you a broken nose!"

He summoned some energy to his hands and he ran up to the wolf, ready to knock his daylights out but Bunnie tackled him from the side and sent him sprawling on the road.

"Ya'll leave Ravage alone!" yelled Bunnie "He's an innocent man and you are getting the wrong idea about him!"

Geoffrey could see this was going to end really badly and start a very bitter fight so he had to clear something's up before total war broke out. Geoffrey put his hands on Bunnie's shoulders and gazed into the Rabbot's beautiful eyes.

"Bunnie, is Ravage what you say he is?" he asked.

"Yeah Geoffrey." said Bunnie "Ah don't know why that lynx and cougar think he's a bad man though, he's not evil at all."

"Well Scott and Jessica have told me all about him." said Geoffrey "They say he led a raid on Mount Adabat to steal the Sceptre of Fates and ended up getting exiled for it. And they also say he's here to try and find the sceptre again and all Scott and Jessica are doing is trying to stop the bloke from finding it since it's against the law to use it."

"That can't be true!" blurted Bunnie "Ravage told me he left Adabat because he wanted to get out of the country for a while. And he also told me a gang of thieves tried to steal the Sceptre of Fates, he had nothin' to do with it!"

Geoffrey put a finger to his lips and thought for a moment.

"Well only one of us is wrong." he said "Ravage can't both be a bad guy and a good guy at once. We'll have to get to the bottom of this simply and peacefully. I'll ask questions and make the conclusion once I've finished."

Everybody stood still and waited for the skunk to speak. Geoffrey broke the silence and asked the first question.

"How long have you known Ravage for?" he asked Bunnie.

"Since ah was little." said Bunnie "About five."

"And you two said you first saw him at the age of six." said Geoffrey, looking at Scott and Jessica "Is that right?"

"Yes Geoffrey." said Jessica.

"And if Ravage was presumably exiled as you claim he was, how long has he been gone for?" asked Geoffrey.

"Eleven years." said Jessica "He came back a month ago."

"That's how long it's been since the Peace Gatherers disbanded." said Bunnie "Ah haven't seen Ravage since then."

"Right." said Geoffrey, thinking hard "Some people do change over time, me in particular after the time I was betrayed by a former friend of mine. Maybe Ravage changed into an evil bloke over time…but he doesn't seem to have any hostile intentions…"

"I don't have any hostile intentions young man because I am not a hostile character." snapped Ravage crossly "Can we stop this ridiculous game of good cop and bad cop, it's getting nobody anywhere!"

Geoffrey ignored the angry wolf and continued.

"Bunnie and you two seem to have a different view on Ravage." said Geoffrey, looking at Scott and Jessica again "But Ravage seems more like the way Bunnie sees him. Do you two have anyway to prove to Bunnie he's evil?"

"No unfortunately." said Jessica.

"In that case, I think we should leave Ravage alone and wait until further notice." said Geoffrey "It wouldn't be nice to attack a friend of Bunnie's without having a proper reason to do so."

"WHAT?" cried Scott "Are you stupid or what? Me and Jessica have told you everything about Ravage and you're not going to do anything about it? I thought you and Bunnie were heroes!"

"We are." said Geoffrey "But you two can't prove to Bunnie Ravage is evil and I've never met the bloke before so I don't know who's right about Ravage and who's wrong so I think the best thing to do would be keep watch on him and see what he does."

"Thank you young man, so nice of you to clear things up at last." said Ravage with a particular toothy grin that only a wolf could do "Now if you'll excuse me, Bunnie and I have an outing on Mount Adabat to get to. Come on Bunnie, fly us over to the volcano will you darling?"

"Sure Ravage." said Bunnie.

"Oh no you don't!" yelled Scott, stepping forward and summoning energy to his fists "Bunnie may not believe us and Geoffrey may not be willing to do anything about it but I'm not letting you get away in a hurry Ravage! You are evil and you are going back into exile, or even better, a cold dark prison cell!"

Scott tried to attack the caped wolf but Bunnie stood protectively in front of Ravage and glared at the lynx.

"Ya'll will not lay a finger on him!" she yelled "If ya'll wanna hurt Ravage for something he would never dream of doing then ya'll have to fight me first!"

"You're on Bunnie!" yelled Scott "I am going to show you up for the gullible prat you are!"

"Scott, please don't do this!" begged Jessica "This is only going to make matters worse!"

"Oh shut up Jessica!" snapped Scott "If Bunnie wants a pounding, she'll get one and it will serve her right for being so gullible and obstinate!"

That did it. Bunnie immediately pounced on Scott and tackled him to the ground. The two began to wrestle with each other as Bunnie tried to attack Scott and Scott tried to wrestle Bunnie off of himself. Ravage grinned evilly. Bunnie was beating up an enemy of his for him and he knew he was going to enjoy every minute of it. Scott kicked Bunnie off himself and threw some energy spears at her. Bunnie deployed her force field generator which was built into her robot arm and she defended herself with a pink laser barrier from the energy attacks. Bunnie then transformed her force field generator back into its normal arm form and she punched Scott in

the face. The lynx was knocked off his feet and onto his back. Bunnie ran up to Scott, ready to attack him again but Scott threw an energy spear in her face. The Rabbot yelped in pain and rubbed her face, only to get an energy enhanced punch from Scott. The lynx began to punch Bunnie repeatedly and at a swift speed, not giving Bunnie a chance to fight back. With every punch he threw, he grunted and yelled loudly and after a dozen punches, he gave Bunnie an energy enhanced uppercut that sent her hurling backwards in a rainbow arch. But Bunnie managed to flip herself forward so she would land on her feet instead of her back and she did so, skidding backwards a good few meters before stopping. Scott ran up to Bunnie again but Bunnie extended her robot arm and let him have it in the cheek. The lynx was thrown onto his side and he grimaced in pain. Before Scott could get up, Bunnie grabbed him and tossed him over the fence and into the sand on the other side. The lynx had a face full of sand yet again and he began spitting it all out of his mouth. Scott picked himself up only to get pile-dived by Bunnie and knocked back onto his stomach. Then Bunnie picked Scott up and threw him further across the beach. So far in fact he landed right at the edge of the sand where the waves of sea came in and drenched everything. The sea came in and Scott found himself getting drenched by the water. Bunnie huffed to herself and flew back onto the road on the other side of the fence and she dusted her hands off.

"Well that takes care of that." she said "Ah'm sorry I had to do that to your friend sugah." she said to Jessica.

"Scott was begging for it." said Jessica "And he's always like that so I'm used to it. After that he'll hopefully learn not to pick a fight with everybody he meets."

"If that boy wants to become a Royal Fighter then he's gonna have to set a better example and change his attitude." said Geoffrey bitterly "Stubborn boys that love to pick a fight like him won't do well in the Royal Fighters Service."

Jessica nodded in agreement. These were the times were she wondered why she was friends with Scott in the first place. As for Scott, he had picked himself up and trudged back to the road on the other side of the fence. He was covered in sand and very, very wet.

He didn't look very happy at all but he was too humiliated and upset to say anything so he kept quiet but he still glared at Ravage. The wolf just smirked at him, pleased to have seen Bunnie beat the snot out of him and make him look like a complete idiot.

"Now we've dealt with this messy business, can we go to Mount Adabat now?" asked Ravage.

"Sure Ravage." said Bunnie "Ah don't want things to start getting ugly again."

"What are you two going to Mount Adabat for?" asked Geoffrey suspiciously.

"That's classified business between me and Bunnie skunk boy." hissed Ravage "I'm not content with telling you since you don't trust me."

"Fair enough." said Geoffrey "I'll keep Scott and Jessica occupied while you two do whatever it is yer doing at Mount Adabat."

"Very well." said Ravage "Let's go Bunnie."

"Bye Geoff." said Bunnie "Ah won't be gone long."

Geoffrey just casually waved Bunnie goodbye as she put her hands on Ravage's waist and carried him off the ground and flew off towards Mount Adabat with the rockets in her roboticized feet. The moment the two were out of earshot, Geoffrey turned around and spoke to Jessica, who was trying to comfort a still very angry Scott Lynx.

"What do you two think about Bunnie being with Ravage then?" he asked.

"I would say that Ravage is manipulating Bunnie into helping him with his nefarious schemes but Bunnie really does seem familiar with him." said Jessica "Maybe she doesn't know about Ravage's raid, sentence and exile from eleven years ago so she still thinks he's a good person. In all honesty, me and Scott never knew Ravage WAS a good person to start with."

"I guess he's a traitor then." said Geoffrey "But we can't prove that to Bunnie without the right proof. I say we should wait and see what they're doing on Mount Adabat and if he does anything suspicious, we can attack him."

"But we can't see them from here." said Scott quietly and calmly, the fight with Bunnie seemed to have dampened his bad-tempered demeanour a little "Mount Adabat's too far away. There's no way of seeing what they're doing."

"There is actually." said Jessica "There's a telescope on that fence over there."

She pointed to the fence and a few sections away from them; a medium-sized blue telescope was attached to it. Geoffrey ran over to the telescope and he peered through it. To his good luck, he didn't have to put any coins in for it to work and he adjusted the telescope a little so he could see Bunnie and Ravage heading to Mount Adabat. He could see them just arriving at the volcano and getting ready to land. Now he could see what was going on, Geoffrey decided to just stand and wait and see what was going to happen. He hoped that Ravage wasn't what Scott and Jessica made him out to be and he hoped that Ravage was what Bunnie made him out to be otherwise Bunnie would be in trouble…

As for Bunnie and Ravage, they touched down on Mount Adabat and Bunnie whipped out the detector device and peered it at. It didn't appear to be displaying anything so far. Ravage looked out into the view he had from Mount Adabat's immense height, his flowing cape blowing in the gusty wind. He could see the golden sand beaches and the village from where he was and he could see the sea that surrounded the volcano he and Bunnie were standing on now.

"The view's splendid up here." said Ravage "Truly radiant indeed isn't it Bunnie?"

"It sure is." said Bunnie "Ah've been up here before* you know."

"Have you?" said Ravage with interest "Well this is my first time up here and I must say, I'm glad I'm up here, this view is incredible."

As Ravage observed the view, Bunnie continued pacing around the mountain while peering at the detector to see if it was picking up anything. Unfortunately, it didn't appear to be showing anything. Bunnie began to get a despairing feeling in her stomach that her guess was horribly wrong and they were up on Mount Adabat for nothing. Bunnie was not about to give up though, she wanted to help her friend find the Sceptre of Fates and find it is what she was going to do. Bunnie steadily climbed and stepped around Mount Adabat until she was completely around the back of the volcano. That's when the detector suddenly started beeping wildly and displaying waves of energy on the screen. Bunnie's ears stood up straight with excitement.

"Ravage!" she cried "Ah think ah durn found somethin'!"

Ravage heard the Rabbot's excited cries and he steadily stepped around the mountain, clinging onto the rocky surface with his claws so he wouldn't lose his balance and fall. He soon caught up with Bunnie and he peered at the detector. His face brightened and he grinned like a crocodile.

"It seems you may have been right about the Royals hiding the sceptre in Mount Adabat again." he purred happily "Why don't you bust your way through the wall and see what there is."

"Sho' nuff Ravage." said Bunnie brightly "Stand back, there maybe a lotta rocks flyin' about!"

She flew off the mountain with her rocket feet and she transformed her arm into an arm cannon. She blasted the volcano with her arm cannon and rocks were sent hurling everywhere. Ravage had stepped back like Bunnie had told him to so he didn't get hit by anything. After the smoke cleared and the rocks stopped falling and tumbling, Bunnie flew towards the colossal hole she had made in the rocky wall and was met with a bright green glow. There at the back of the crater was a green sceptre. The sceptre had a round structure at the top with two elegant spiked structures on either side, one pointed up and one pointed down. The centre had funny wobbly gel

like stuff swimming around in it and it glowed brightly Ravage peered into the hole and beamed like a sunrise.

"The Sceptre of Fates!" he cried "Hallelujah we've found it!"

"That's the Sceptre of Fates?" asked Bunnie "It's beautiful looking isn't it?"

"It sure is Bunnie." said Ravage "And it'll look beautiful once I use it to smite the population of Adabat!"

"Huh?" asked Bunnie, not sure if she heard Ravage wrong "What did ya'll just say?"

Ravage didn't answer her. Instead he pulled out a tiny, round, metal device from his cloak pocket and attached it to Bunnie's neck before she could say anything or do anything. The moment the device was attached to her, the Rabbot passed out and fell on the rocky floor in a deep sleep. Ravage smiled evilly at the knocked out cyborg rabbit before him.

"Since I don't believe in killing those who don't deserve it, I thought I'd just put you to sleep and let you die peacefully up here." said Ravage with a smirk even though Bunnie wouldn't be able to hear him "After all, I can't let you stop me from getting my revenge on the country that gave me these abysmal scars and denied me my chance to bring world peace."

Ravage then stepped casually over the knocked-out Bunnie as if she was just a log to step over and he seized the magnificent sceptre with his clawed hands. He held the sceptre up to his face and grinned wildly and inanely.

"The Royals were smart to hide the sceptre back into Mount Adabat, the one thing I'd have never expected them to do," crowed Ravage "But they would have been wiser just to destroy it so I'd never find it again. Now I have the sceptre once again, I can use it's power to ruin the people of Adabat's lives and kill the Royals, and then I'll use it to crown myself the new King of Adabat and everybody will respect the power of the sceptre and what it can do or I'll smite them all!"

He bellowed with laughter and waved the sceptre around with joy. He stepped out of the crater Bunnie had made and looked over his shoulder at her. He smiled slyly and left her behind in an eternal sleep that she'd never wake up from unless the device was removed.

"Thank you for helping me find this Bunnie." said the wolf evilly "Pity you won't be here to see what you've helped me accomplish."

He climbed back around to the front of Mount Adabat and he raised the sceptre high above his head, it's green glow now right enough to engulf his hand and energy swirled around Ravage like a spinning snake decoration in a garden.

"Revenge is mine and soon ADABAT WILL BE MINE!" bellowed Ravage and using the power of the sceptre, he began to levitate off the ground and fly off Mount Adabat.

"YES!" he bellowed as he flew back towards Adabat with the sceptre in hand. He cackled with maniacal laughter as the sceptre's power flowed through his veins…

Footnotes:

***See Story 41**

Ravage has the Sceptre of Fates! Is Adabat doomed or can Bunnie, Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica stop the mad wolf? Find out in the explosive finale next time! Reviews are welcome.

Trouble in Adabat 3

Arc 4: Trouble in Adabat

Takes place during Stories: 52-56

Part 3

Geoffrey St. John looked up from the telescope he had been looking through to see what was happening at Mount Adabat and his face was full of fear. He saw Ravage flying towards the shore with the Sceptre of Fates in his hands and cackling like a mad man. Geoffrey could instantly tell from this that Scott Lynx and Jessica Cougar, the local heroes of Adabat were right about Ravage all along and that the wolf was evil and wanting to use the sceptre's powers for evil.

"Ravage has the sceptre and he's coming this way!" cried Geoffrey.

"He's found the sceptre?" cried Jessica "Oh my god, this is bad! So very bad!"

"This is weird though." said Scott "Why did the Royals hide it in Mount Adabat again? Isn't hiding it in the same place as before a bit bone idle?"

"I guess the Royals did it because they thought no one would think to look there since it would seem stupid to hide something in a place it was already hidden in." thought Jessica "Bunnie must be one smart woman if she managed to work that out."

"She is smart." said Geoffrey "Unfortunately; she wasn't smart enough to realize that her old friend Ravage Bloodfang has turned traitor on his own country. Oh well, now we can kick the bloke's butt outta Adabat for good!" he declared, loading his trademark arm-mounted crossbow weapon.

"Now that's what I like to hear!" yelled Scott happily, summoning some energy to his hands, surrounding them with green balls of energy.

Jessica did the same and they all awaited for the caped wolf with the Sceptre of Fates to attack. Ravage saw his prey down below and he charged down to the ground at a lightening fast pace with his teeth bared in a devilish grin. Scott and Jessica threw energy spears at the wolf and Geoffrey fired some darts rapidly at Ravage. But the sceptre's power defended Ravage from their attacks by surrounding the skull-masked wolf with energy waves. Ravage landed on the ground and using the sceptre's incredible power, blew everybody away with that one slam into the ground. Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica all landed in a heap a few feet away from the wolf. Ravage began cackling like a demon as the sceptre's power continued surging up and down his body. His eyes began to glow a sickly green colour and he had swirls of green energy circling around his body.

"Power!" he cried "So much power contained in this mere sceptre! Truly a radiant weapon and it'll get me my revenge! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"That sceptre is not yours to misuse Ravage!" cried Scott, running towards the wolf with his powers at the ready.

Ravage just aimed the sceptre at the lynx and that seemed to halt the lynx in mid-air before he could pounce on him. Then the sceptre began to glow a marvellous green colour and Scott himself was glowing green too. Then green swirls of energy began coming out of Scott's body and swirling around the spear like a long ribbon being twirled by a dancer. Geoffrey and Jessica watched this performance with wonder and began to wonder what was going on.

"What's the bloke doing with that sceptre?" asked Geoffrey.

"I think he's using it to drain Scott's power." Jessica deduced "He's weakening him so he'll be easy prey and I bet he'll do the same to me!"

Jessica was absolutely right too, Ravage was indeed draining Scott off his powers with the Sceptre of Fates. The sceptre gave Scott his powers and it could take them back just as easily. The sceptre stopped glowing and Scott dropped to the ground, all of the sudden feeling weak and feeble now.

"My…my powers…" he gasped hoarsely "You…you took them!"

"Yes, I did boy." sneered Ravage "You and your pesky girlfriend were only just a challenge when you had those powers gifted to you by the sceptre so what does being without them make you? Nothing that's what! Now I'll finish you off before you can bother me again!"

He raised the sceptre and prepared to stab Scott in the back with the sharp structures on the sceptre. Jessica leaped to her feet and fired an energy spear at Ravage's hand. The spear hit his hand and Ravage dropped the sceptre. He grabbed his hand in pain and Scott immediately lunged for the sceptre. Ravage smacked Scott away before the lynx could get the sceptre and he quickly picked it up before anyone could steal it. Jessica ran up to Ravage and tried to punch him but the wolf pointed the sceptre at her and blasted her with raw energy. The cougar was sent hurling backwards a good few meters and the wolf smiled a cruel smile at his victims.

"You kids are mental if you think you can stand up to the power of the sceptre!" growled Ravage "With this weapon, I am invincible!"

Then suddenly Geoffrey fired a dart at Ravage and the dart skimmed him across the shoulder. It didn't do much harm to the wolf and Ravage reacted by letting Geoffrey have it with the sceptre's power. The skunk hurtled through the air and he landed beside the fence, groaning in pain.

"Blimey that's a powerful sceptre!" he muttered.

Ravage roared angrily and he charged towards Geoffrey with energy fizzling around his hands and in his eyes. Jessica ran up to Ravage and fired some energy spears at the wolf's legs. Ravage was stricken and he tripped up and he fell onto his face. Jessica then tried to snatch the sceptre off of him while he was down but Ravage elbowed her in the gut before she could get it. Ravage leaped up onto his feet and whacked Jessica with the sceptre as if it was a golf club and she was a golf ball. Scott leaped on Ravage's back and yanked on his ears, causing Ravage to roar and flail about madly. Scott then put his hands over Ravage's eyes and Ravage tried to pull the lynx off of his head. Ravage hit Scott with the sceptre but the lynx still managed to cling on to his head, yanking on his fur and

ears just to hurt him. Ravage, with a roar, seized Scott by the scruff of his neck and threw the lynx off of his head. Scott landed with a thump by the fence. Ravage tried to clobber Scott with the sceptre but Geoffrey appeared from nowhere and punched Ravage directly in the face. Ravage fell onto his side and dropped the sceptre. He tried to grab it but Geoffrey fired a dart at his hand, causing him to cry out in pain and clutch his hand. Scott made a quick grab for the sceptre and he seized it before Ravage could grab it. The moment he did so, the sceptre gave him his powers back since the sceptre does what the user wishes it to do. Now he was powered back up and he had the deadly weapon, Scott had the advantage over his sworn enemy. Ravage growled fiercely at Scott and pounced on him like a natural wolf hunting prey. Scott whacked him with the sceptre and the wolf crashed into the ground. The impact broke one of the fangs on his skull mask. Ravage growled angrily and he charged towards the lynx again but Scott used the sceptre's power to blast Ravage away and send him sprawling. Geoffrey ran in to do some fighting and he fired some darts at Ravage. Ravage was hit by all of them but his suit protected him from harm and he just pulled all the darts out of his suit. Then Geoffrey began to let loose a series of punches on Ravage's face. He began punching him furiously, not giving the wolf a chance to fight back.

"Take, that, you, deceptive, little, creep!" grunted Geoffrey with every punch he threw.

He then leaped into the air and dropkicked Ravage in the head, leaving cracks on his mask and sending him sprawling. The wolf groaned in pain and he sat up. Geoffrey grabbed Ravage by the neck and looked him squarely in the eye.

"Right you blighter, where's Bunnie Rabbot?" demanded Geoffrey "You'd better tell me or I'm gonna send you off to dreamland!"

He aimed his crossbow at Ravage's neck as a sign of being serious. Ravage smiled slyly at Geoffrey.

"I wouldn't worry too much about Bunnie skunk boy." he purred in a dangerously soft tone of voice "She's taking a beauty nap in Mount Adabat. A nap she'll never wake up from."

"What do you mean you scoundrel?" demanded Geoffrey fiercely, shoving his weapon in Ravage's face.

"Find out yourself." said Ravage dryly "That is, if you can get over to Mount Adabat."

That did it, Geoffrey gave Ravage a sharp punch to the face that knocked Ravage back down on his back. That punch really hurt and Ravage clutched his muzzle in pain. Geoffrey then ran off and leaped over the fence and onto the beach.

"Hey, where are you going Mr. St. John?" asked Jessica.

"To Mount Adabat to get Bunnie." Geoffrey called to the cougar over his shoulder "You keep wolf man busy, I'll be back in a minute."

"If you wanna get over to Mount Adabat quicker, I suggest you use this!" cried Scott, throwing the Sceptre of Fates over to Geoffrey.

Geoffrey stopped running off and he turned around to catch the sceptre as it hurtled towards him. Geoffrey caught the sceptre in his hands and looked down at the weapon he was now holding.

"How do I blooming' use this thing?" he wondered.

"Just think of what you want to do and it'll grant your wish." Jessica called to Geoffrey.

Geoffrey got the idea and he began thinking about flying over to Mount Adabat. The sceptre didn't have teleporting abilities so flying there was the only way to get to Mount Adabat. As Geoffrey thought about flying, the sceptre began to glow brightly and Geoffrey began to levitate slowly off the ground. Geoffrey looked down at his feet and realized he was now flying. He beamed happily at the fact the sceptre's power was working and Geoffrey began to fly off to Mount Adabat. Scott and Jessica stared in awe at the flying skunk with the sceptre in his hands.

"Cool!" cried Scott "I might have to try that when he's finished with it!"

Then suddenly, Ravage pounced on Scott from behind and pinned

him down to the ground, snarling loudly. Jessica screamed and threw an energy spear at him. Ravage smacked the attack away and he leaped at Jessica. He grabbed the cougar by the throat and hoisted her clean off the ground. Jessica struggled in his grasp as Ravage clenched her throat.

"I am going to make you two wish you'd never tangled with me!" roared Ravage "You two have been such a nuisance to me over the weeks and I am going to put you both out of my life forever!"

He then tossed Jessica about sixteen meters across the road. The cougar landed painfully on her side and she cried out in pain. Scott leaped on Ravage and let him have an energy enhanced punch to the back of the head. Ravage fell down on his hands and knees and Scott punched him again. Ravage leaped back on to his feet and slashed at Scott. Scott dodged the attack and gave him an energy enhanced uppercut that sent the wolf hurling over the fence and onto the sandy beach on the other side. Scott laughed at him, pleased to see his sworn enemy getting a mouthful of sand this time. Ravage picked himself up and growled ferociously at the lynx. Scott threw a ball of energy at Ravage and the attack smacked him in the face, cracking his skull mask even more. Ravage roared and leaped at the lynx. Ravage was a good leaper and he could leap very far. He landed on the other side of the fence and right on top of Scott. He grabbed Scott by the neck and hoisted him up to his height. Jessica tried to help but Ravage turned around and whacked her with his arm. Then he threw Scott into Jessica and the two were sent sprawling on the road. Ravage snarled a fierce snarl and he ran towards his enemies on all fours. Scott and Jessica picked themselves up just in time to dodge Ravage's charge. Ravage skidded to a halt and charged at them again. Jessica tried to throw some energy spears at Ravage but the wolf grabbed her arms and shoved them upwards, causing her to fire up at the sky instead. The two then began to furiously punch at each other but they kept blocking each other's blows so no one was gaining the upper hand on each other. Scott ran up to Ravage with energy in his hands and he prepared to give the wolf a powerful punch from behind but Ravage heard him coming and he stepped to the side, leaving Scott to accidentally sock Jessica directly in the face with an energy enhanced punch. The orange haired cougar was completely

shocked and startled by that powerful punch and she found herself lying on her back looking up at the sky not really sure which way was up. Scott realized what he'd just done by accident and he ran over to help his girlfriend.

"Oh I'm so sorry Jessica!" he cried.

"It's alright Scott." grunted Jessica, rubbing her pretty face better "You would have hit Ravage if he didn't move out the way."

Then suddenly, before anyone was ready, Ravage grabbed Scott and Jessica by their throats and hoisted them up to his height. He roared at them with saliva dripping out of his jaws and he proceeded to bash them together and throw them a good distance up the road. Scott and Jessica landed on their stomachs with their heads throbbing and they rubbed their throbbing heads.

"Ouch!" cried Scott, grimacing in pain "That Ravage is a pain, literally!"

"He always has been!" grunted Jessica "I have a feeling he's taking no prisoners this time round! He's being more fierce then usual!"

Ravage advanced menacingly on his foes with his teeth bared and his claws ready to slice them open. His yellow eyes burned with rage and he was growling ever so softly. So softly in fact Scott and Jessica could feel his growls go right through them and it made them shudder.

"Fun time is over children!" growled Ravage, standing over them like a sinister gargoyle "You've been excellent entertainment for me all these weeks but now you're just vexing me! Your entertainment value has expired and it's time it put you both down! I'll even eat your remains for tea when I'm finished!"

"Sorry Ravage but lynx and cougar are off the menu tonight!" yelled Scott, throwing two energy spears into Ravage's eyes.

The spears struck the wolf and he roared in pain while clutching his eyes. Scott and Jessica leaped onto their feet and they pounced on Ravage, grabbing him by his arms and clutching tightly onto him.

Ravage roared at them and he effortlessly managed to throw them both off his arms. Scott and Jessica skidded backwards and they charged at Ravage who was charging at them on all fours. They all pounced at each other, yelling loud battle cries as they did so…

Meanwhile, Geoffrey had flown over to Mount Adabat thanks to the Sceptre of Fates and he immediately began searching for Bunnie. He didn't have to look far though since after a minute of stepping carefully across the volcano's rocky terrain he found the crater that Bunnie had made to find the sceptre. He looked in the crater and found Bunnie unconscious on the floor. Geoffrey beamed with delight and he ran over to the sleeping rabbit. He bent down by Bunnie's side and began to shake her lightly.

"Bunnie?" said Geoffrey "Come on luv, wake up, we've got an evil wolf to defeat."

Bunnie didn't stir. She remained as she was. Geoffrey began to shake her harder.

"Bunnie!" cried Geoffrey desperately "Come on! Please! We need you right now!"

Bunnie still didn't wake up. Geoffrey began to fear the worst. Had Ravage killed her? She didn't seem to have any wounds or signs of a fight on her body so that didn't seem to be the case. Then again, Ravage may have used the sceptre to drain her life-force away. But could the sceptre do that? It was said that it could bring good or bad depending on the user but Scott and Jessica didn't say anything about it being able to kill people. Bunnie must just be in a coma or something. A coma she needed to come out of and fast.

"Come on Bunnie!" cried Geoffrey, shaking the Rabbot harder and harder "Adabat is at stake!"

Bunnie still didn't move. Geoffrey began to despair. It seemed she wouldn't wake up for a while.

"What did that Ravage bloke do to you?" he wondered to himself

"He must have hit you good and hard and knocked you out. And it seems he did a good job too."

Then Geoffrey spotted something round and silver on Bunnie's neck. He reached to Bunnie's neck and gripped the thing between his thumb and finger. He then proceeded to remove the thing from Bunnie's neck and he held it to his face and gave it a good look at.

"What the blooming heck is it?" he wondered "Whatever it is, I bet Ravage put it on her."

Shortly after Geoffrey had removed the device planted on Bunnie's neck by Ravage, Bunnie began to stir and twitch. Geoffrey saw Bunnie stirring and his eyes gleamed with joy. He smiled happily at the fact Bunnie was getting up. Bunnie sat up and began rubbing her neck which was throbbing a little from the device that Ravage had planet on her.

"Huh…what the hoo-ha happened to me…" the Rabbot muttered to herself.

"Bunnie!" cried Geoffrey happily "You're awake! I guess this little thing put you to sleep." He added, looking at the device he still held in-between his finger and thumb "I wonder who planted it on you?"

"Ah think Ravage did it." said Bunnie "Ah can remember him saying somethin' ah didn't quite catch and then he touched mah neck and ah just fell asleep. Ah guess he put that little thing on me and it knocked me out."

"Good thing I removed it then." said Geoffrey, crushing the tiny device in between his finger and thumb "Otherwise you'd have been stuck in dreamland forever."

"What's been happening while ah've been sleepin' then?" asked Bunnie.

"Ravage has been using the sceptre to try and kill me, Scott and Jessica." explained Geoffrey "The bloke wants to get revenge on Adabat for exiling him I think."

"He wha…?" cried Bunnie "Oh mah stars! The lynx and cougar were

right! Ravage is evil! And ah didn't believe them! Oh why didn't I believe them?"

"It can be hard to see the changes on a person when you see them again after a while." said Geoffrey softly "It was hard for you to believe an old friend of yours had changed since you knew him as a good person before."

"Ah understand Geoff." said Bunnie "So how's things goin' on now?"

"Well hopefully Scott and Jessica have ground the blighter into the dirt by now." said Geoffrey bitterly "And I've got the Sceptre of Fates right here."

He picked up the sceptre which was lying beside him and he showed it to the surprised Rabbot. Bunnie stared in surprise at the sceptre.

"How did ya'll manage to get it?" asked Bunnie.

"Scott got it off Ravage and gave it to me." said Geoffrey "I used it to fly over here to get you."

Bunnie smiled sweetly at Geoffrey. She was touched to hear how devoted the skunk was to his duty and her well-being, coming all this way just to wake her up. The skunk really did like her a lot didn't he? Bunnie then got to her feet and took the sceptre off of Geoffrey, making the skunk wonder what the Rabbot was up to. Bunnie then wondered over to the mouth of the crater that she had made and using all her might, she threw the sceptre into the air. Then she transformed her robot arm into a cannon and blasted the sceptre as it began to fall down. The mighty green weapon was completely destroyed by the cannon blast and it was reduced to slithers and green energy floating about before dissolving into nothingness. The Sceptre of Fates was gone for good, never to be used again. Geoffrey was dumbfounded by that act and he began wondering what Bunnie did it for.

"Bunnie! We could have used that!" cried Geoffrey.

"Ah know we could." said Bunnie "But ah also knew that we couldn't

afford to lose it again. The weapon is too dangerous to leave in Ravage's claws so ah had to destroy it before Ravage or indeed anyone could use it for destructive purposes. The Sceptre of Fates can't harm anyone ever again."

"I see." said Geoffrey "But you could have at least let me club Ravage's furry backside with it first!"

Bunnie giggled.

"Ah guess ah should have." she said "But Ravage needs more then a clubbin' to the backside from a sceptre. He needs a dealin' with from me! Ah'm gonna teach him a lesson for betrayin' me like that!"

"That's what I like to hear!" said Geoffrey with an evil smirk on his face "Let's get going and kick Ravage's butt outta Adabat once and for all!"

Bunnie nodded and she put her arms around Geoffrey's waist. She lifted the skunk off the ground and she flew into the air with the rockets in her metal feet. She flew away from the great volcano and flew towards the shore where Ravage Bloodfang was waiting for a serious showdown with Bunnie Rabbot…

On the shore, Scott and Jessica weren't faring too well against Ravage. The wolf completely had the battle in his favour these past minutes. Every time Scott or Jessica tried to attack the wolf, Ravage would just strike back harder and since he had been fighting with them for so long, he knew most of their battle tactics and how to counter-attack. Scott and Jessica's energy attacks were just not enough to defeat Ravage. The wolf was a skilled combatant and he could easily take on some of Eggman's strongest robots should he ever battle them. Ravage gave Scott and uppercut and he kicked Jessica away as the lynx and cougar tried to attack him once again and they were sent sprawling on the ground. They groaned weakly and they tried to get up but they were much too weak from the beating Ravage had given them. Ravage cackled like a demented maniac at his fallen victims.

"That is why you were so entertaining for me before children!" he crowed "You're so easy to defeat it became fun kicking your backsides every time! But since you offer me no challenge whatsoever you've quickly become boring and tedious so now I've just defeated you once again, I'll finish you both off, for good!"

He grabbed Scott by his neck and hoisted him up to his height. The lynx was too weak to try and struggle free. He just stared helplessly into Ravage's eyes as the skull-mask wearing wolf flashed a toothy grin that could make a tiger jealous at him.

"You little boy are the most irksome of the two." purred Ravage "I'll eat you first. I bet an energy powered lynx tastes nicer then a normal lynx!"

"No…please…" begged Scott weakly.

Ravage ignored him and opened his fearsome jaws. He was about to clamp his jaws on the lynx's neck and kill him until he was suddenly kicked in the side of the head by a flying thing. It was Bunnie Rabbot! She and Geoffrey had arrived just in time to save Scott and Jessica from a grisly fate. Ravage lay sprawling on his side wondering which way was up and Bunnie landed on the ground. Geoffrey ran over to Scott and Jessica and he helped them both up.

"You blokes OK?" he asked.

"We are…now you're here…Mr. St. John." grunted Jessica, rubbing her side better "Thank you for saving our lives…"

Ravage picked himself up and looked up at Bunnie Rabbot who stood there with her hands on her hips and a very stern look on her pretty face.

"Bunnie my dear!" exclaimed Ravage "Such a marvellous surprise it is to see you awake! I was beginning to fear you were gone my child!"

"Drop the pretence Ravage." snapped Bunnie "Ah know all about your true motivations now. Scott and Jessica were right all along,

you are evil and you wanna use the Sceptre of Fates for evil! Well too bad because ah've destroyed it now!"

"You destroyed it?" shrieked Ravage "You stupid witch! I could have fulfilled the destiny of the Peace Gatherers with that sceptre and you've gone and destroyed it! I thought you desired peace as much as the whole group did but it's clear to me you don't! What do you have to say about yourself Bunnie Scarlett Rabbot?"

"Ah say ah did the right thing." retorted Bunnie "Ya'll don't wanna bring peace to Mobius, ya'll wanna destroy Adabat and get revenge on the country! Why do ya'll wanna do that?"

Ravage growled at Bunnie before answering her calmly but crossly.

"Because they exiled me for trying to steal the sceptre the first time!" he growled, removing his skull-mask to show Bunnie his hideous scars all over his face "These scars are from the torture I received as punishment for my crimes. I only wished to use the sceptre to bring peace to Mobius but those infernal Royals took their repugnant law too seriously and punished me for trying to use the forbidden weapon. If only they could have seen what good could be accomplished with the sceptre they wouldn't have been so bone-idle! But they threw me out and left me scars that I am humiliated to have on my face! So for that, I will punish them for their foolishness and see how they like it and I am not going to let a cyborg freak like you mar my chances!"

"No one calls me a freak and lives!" screeched Bunnie "You and I are gonna have a showdown, just the two of us, and ah am gonna kick you out of Adabat for good!"

"So it's a gentlemen's challenge is it?" sneered Ravage, throwing his mask away "Oh well, I love a good fight so I accept. The winner lives and the loser dies, now let's do it! The fate of Adabat depends on this fight."

"Please, for the good of Adabat, don't do this Ravage old friend." begged Bunnie smoothly and calmly.

She didn't want to fight her old friend. She wanted to reason with the

wolf and see if she could get the wolf to deviate from his desires and turn back into the Ravage she knew as a child. Sadly, the wolf didn't seem to have any signs of redemption in him. The wolf narrowed his eyes at the reluctant bunny that stood before him.

"I have to do this." he snarled coldly "You are my only obstacle that stands in my way of revenge and I must eliminate it."

"Then, ah'm sorry Ravage but ah'm gonna have to do this." said Bunnie "You ready?"

"Whenever you are my child." hissed Ravage with a toothy grin on his face.

Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica looked at each other. Bunnie and Ravage were about to fight! Will Bunnie win? Only time would tell as the Rabbot and wolf stared daggers at each other. Ravage roared ferociously at Bunnie and he pounced at her. Bunnie screamed and tried to run away but Ravage landed on top of her and they rolled over together on the ground. Ravage then leaped off the ground while holding Bunnie above his head and he tossed her straight into the road. Bunnie landed on her back and skidded to a very painful halt. Ravage then pounced at Bunnie again but Bunnie raised her legs and kicked him in the stomach, sending him flying over her and landing face first onto the ground. Bunnie leaped to her feet and grabbed Ravage's arm. She forced it behind his back, causing the wolf to cry out in pain.

"Ravage, stop this!" pleaded Bunnie "Ah know ya'll are better then this! Ya'll never had vengeful intentions before so why now?"

"I never had a reason to get revenge on someone!" spat Ravage, wrenching his arm out of Bunnie's grasp and elbowing her in the gut "But I have one now and when I want revenge, I WANT revenge and I won't rest until I've gotten it!"

He then proceeded to slug Bunnie in the stomach. Bunnie fell to the ground, gasping and wheezing and Ravage yanked on the Rabbot's hair, making her scream. Ravage then tried to sock Bunnie in the face but Bunnie grabbed his fist with her robot arm before he could land the punch and she sharply twisted Ravage's arm. Ravage

yelped like a dog that had gotten its tail trapped in the door and he tried to wrench his arm out of Bunnie's grasp. Bunnie held on tightly and she then threw Ravage onto the ground with a slam. Ravage picked himself up and Bunnie leaped onto the wolf's back. Ravage growled and began to squirm about frantically as Bunnie grabbed him in a headlock and tried to wrestle him down to the ground. The Rabbot's grasp was tough and Ravage was finding it hard to get out of the headlock. Bunnie then thumped Ravage sharply on the head with her robot fist, earning a roar of pain that made Bunnie shudder from Ravage. Ravage then threw himself down on all fours and slammed Bunnie down on the ground, trying desperately get her off of his head. Bunnie managed to hold on tight but Ravage began to wriggle and writhe about more and more frantically, making it harder and harder for Bunnie to hold on. Ravage then got up on his hind legs and gave his head a mighty jerk that finally threw Bunnie off of himself. Bunnie landed on her feet and dodged and claw attack from Ravage. He roared at her, saliva dripping from his fangs as he did so and he tried to bite her but he missed and ended up with his face hitting the tarmac beneath his feet. Bunnie elbowed Ravage in the neck and then grabbed him in another headlock. Ravage squirmed furiously but Bunnie held on tight and she threw the wolf into the fence. Ravage went straight through the fence and landed on the sandy beach on the other side. Bunnie ran over to Ravage in order to attack him again but Ravage threw sand in her eyes. Bunnie screamed in pain as sand went into her eyes and she began furiously rubbing them. Ravage then lunged at Bunnie and punched her in the jaw. He decided to take advantage of Bunnie's blinded state and cut loose on her. He punched her in the jaw again, causing her to spit out some drops of saliva, then in the muzzle, then in the eye and then in the gut. Ravage then punched Bunnie in the face, causing her to stagger backwards and Bunnie rubbed her eyes to get the sand out. She finally got the sand out of her eyes but she was too late to react and Ravage gave her a tremendous uppercut that sent her hurling backwards through the air in a neat rainbow arch. Bunnie landed on her back, gasping and panting as Ravage ran up to her on all fours. Scott, Jessica and Geoffrey weren't pleased with how this fight was coming on and they were desperate to do something.

"Ravage is going to kill Bunnie!" shrieked Jessica.

"We've got to help her!" cried Scott.

"I'll stop the bloke!" declared Geoffrey, loading his crossbow and running up after the caped wolf as he ran up to Bunnie.

Ravage made it to Bunnie and he raised his claws, ready to plunge them into the Rabbot until Geoffrey fired a dart at the wolf's hand, causing him to roar in pain. Ravage turned around and saw Geoffrey coming towards him with his crossbow ready to fire again. Ravage smiled wickedly at Geoffrey and he just held his hand out. Geoffrey couldn't stop himself in time and he accidentally ended up running into Ravage's hand. Ravage's claws closed around Geoffrey's neck and he slam-dunked him down into the ground.

"I'll thank you for NOT interfering with this battle!" roared Ravage "This is a fight between me and Bunnie only! No one else!"

"Ya'll put Geoffrey down you creep!" screeched Bunnie, punching at the wolf.

Her arm extended so she could punch Ravage at a safe distance but Ravage caught her extending robot arm in his claws. He smiled malevolently at the startled Rabbot. Bunnie freaked and her ears stood up in surprise at what Ravage had just done.

"Oh mah stars!" she blurted.

Ravage then pulled on Bunnie's arm and pulled her forward. He then slammed Geoffrey directly into Bunnie, sending the skunk and Rabbot sprawling on the ground. Bunnie picked herself up and Geoffrey picked himself up.

"Ya'll get to safety Geoff." said Bunnie "Ah've got this."

"I hope you're right." said Geoffrey, respectfully running away from the fight.

He knew Bunnie could take care of herself in battle so he didn't have to worry much. The moment Geoffrey was a safe distance away, Bunnie stepped back into battle and she punched at Ravage. Ravage caught her robot arm in between his hands and he threw it to the side, causing her to stagger to the side and then he socked

her in the cheek. Bunnie retaliated with an uppercut to the chin that sent Ravage falling backwards and landing on his back. Ravage picked himself up and clawed at Bunnie, narrowly missing her as she dodged the attack. Bunnie walloped Ravage in the jaw with her robot arm but Ravage walloped her back with his arm. The two then linked arms with each other and began pushing on each other. They tried as hard as they could to overpower each other but their strength appeared to be evenly matched.

"Bunnie my dear, cease this pointless fight and join me." hissed Ravage as he tried to push her away "Me and you working together could bring peace and prosperity to the world! We can show the world what we're capable of and how to maintain peace!"

"Nugh…ah'd rather be fully roboticized then join you Ravage!" yelled Bunnie.

She suddenly found the strength to push Ravage away and then slug him in the stomach. Ravage roared at Bunnie and pounced on her. The two then began to have a mad struggle with one another as if they were wrestling. Ravage was trying desperately to slash Bunnie with his fearsome claws but Bunnie managed to keep the claws off of her and she grappled with the wolf, trying to keep his claws away and get the wolf off of herself. Ravage managed to claw Bunnie on her metal shoulder but the slashes didn't do too much harm to her and Bunnie grabbed Ravage in a headlock. She then flipped Ravage onto his back, picked him up again and slammed him into the fence. Ravage managed to wrestle free from Bunnie's grasp and claw her across the stomach. Bunnie yelped in pain and clutched her stomach but the wolf didn't stop there, he gave Bunnie and enormous uppercut that sent the Rabbot hurling into the air. Before she could fly away from Ravage, the wolf grabbed her by the ankle and slammed her down onto the road. He then threw her up a few feet off the road and kicked her before she could fall back down. Bunnie landed by Ravage's feet and the wolf kicked her away. Bunnie rolled across the road, writhing in pain and Ravage advanced on her. His fangs were dripping with saliva and he licked his lips.

"Well, well ,well Bunnie, it looks like I win." he gloated "If you had come to your senses and decided to join me in my quest for

revenge, you wouldn't be in this situation now. But it's too late for that, now I will eat you alive and give your robot limbs to the scrap yard!"

He opened his fearsome jaws and prepared to chomp on Bunnie until she blocked his jaws with her robot arm.

"Ah will not fall to you old friend!" said Bunnie coldly.

She then tossed the wolf away while getting back to her feet. Ravage fell over but he was soon back on his feet. Ravage and Bunnie then began to furiously punch at each other at rapid speeds, speeds to fast for Geoffrey, Scott and Jessica to catch as they watched the fight. Bunnie roundhouse kicked at Ravage but the wolf bent over backwards to dodge the kick and then he punched her in the stomach. Bunnie doubled over but quickly recovered and walloped Ravage in the legs her robot arm. Ravage fell onto his hands but before Bunnie could pound him in the back of the head, Ravage swiped at her and blocked her attack. He then leaped onto his feet and clamped his huge jaws on Bunnie's robot arm with a nasty growl. Bunnie screamed in pain and tried to wrestle free of the wolf's toothy grip but try as she might, Ravage held on tighter then a monkey hanging from the trees. A wolf's bite is very powerful and Ravage was no exception. Ravage began to writhe about with Bunnie's arm in his grasp as if he was trying to wrench it out of her socket. Bunnie tried feebly pounding the wolf's muzzle but she couldn't get Ravage to let go. Ravage then yanked on Bunnie's robot arm and tore the entire arm out of its socket! Bunnie screamed in fell down on her knees, rubbing her metal socket where the arm had once been. If someone were to de-roboticize her now, she would be missing an arm. Ravage spat the arm out and slammed Bunnie's head down into the ground.

"We were part of a group once Bunnie!" snarled Ravage "A group meant to bring peace! But now…"

"Ravage, please!" begged Bunnie, reaching out to him with her organic arm but the wolf kicked her away and pinned her down to the ground with his foot.

"…this forlorn "group" will have to have be another member short!"

finished Ravage "Say hi to your worthless mother for me!"

He raised his claws high above his head and prepared to kill the helpless Rabbot in one fell swoop. Bunnie closed her eyes and awaited her doom, a tear escaping her eye as she did so. But before Ravage could kill Bunnie, someone shot a dart into the wolf's back and made him roar in pain. It was Geoffrey St. John! The skunk couldn't bear to watch Bunnie die so he decided to interfere, regardless of the fact the fight was with Bunnie and Ravage only. Geoffrey shot five darts into the wolf's back and then jumped onto him, pulling him down on to the ground.

"Don't you dare hurt Bunnie you blackguard!" shouted Geoffrey as he began to cut loose on the wolf.

He punched him as hard as he could and hit several of the popular targets in a fight such as the face and gut. Geoffrey then roundhouse kicked the stunned wolf in the face, breaking one of his fangs and causing him to spit it out. Ravage tried to fight back but Geoffrey was too fast. He elbowed Ravage in the neck and slammed his head on the fence. That attack left Ravage bedraggled and dazed. He lay on the ground feebly staring up at Geoffrey while trying to figure out what was going on. Geoffrey ran over to Bunnie and helped her back onto her feet.

"You OK luv?" asked Geoffrey.

"Ah am now ya'll just saved mah life." panted Bunnie "Thank ya'll Geoff."

"No problem luv." said Geoffrey "Just doing what friends do that's all."

He wrapped his arm around Bunnie and Bunnie hugged Geoffrey back with her only remaining arm. As for Scott and Jessica, they stood over Ravage and glared at him.

"Ravage you scoundrel, you are busted!" said Scott, pointing sharply at him.

"You are going to prison where you belong." said Jessica "Please

don't try to resist or we'll be forced to handle you rather roughly."

Ravage shook his head and regained his senses. He glared at his enemies and roared at them.

"I am not going in a prison cell!" yelled Ravage "I am getting out of here but mark my words, this will not be the last you'll see of me! I'll be back and I'll destroy Adabat and all who have wronged me! I'll especially be back for you Bunnie Rabbot!"

He leaped over Scott and Jessica and took off at lightening speed on all fours. Scott and Jessica desperately threw energy spears at the wolf in a feeble attempt to stop him but they missed and Ravage disappeared into the distance in a matter of seconds.

"Damn it!" cursed Scott "We almost got him too!"

"We'll get him next time Scott." said Jessica "After all, we know where he'll be hiding."

"I hope you two can eventually catch the blighter." said Geoffrey "He deserves to be locked up forever for his crimes against this country!"

"I can't believe how he's changed." said Bunnie sadly, picking up her robot arm which needed reattaching "He was nothin' like that when ah was younger. He was a kind and gentle man. He's now a bloodthirsty monster with a vengeful streak in his heart. How did he change so drastically?"

"A lot of things can change a person in unimaginable ways." said Geoffrey softly "I changed quite a lot after I was betrayed by a friend in me boyhood. I'm nothing like I used to be when I was a kid."

"Really?" said Bunnie "Fate can change a person quite a lot can't it?"

"That's right." said Geoffrey "Now how are we going to fix your robot arm? We don't have anything to fix it with."

"I do." said Jessica "Back at my place, I have a toolkit. I'm a bit of a mechanic in my spare time and I'll be able to reattach your arm Miss Rabbot."

"Oh that's swell sugah." said Bunnie brightly "Let's go to your place then."

"OK then, follow me." said Jessica.

Jessica and Scott led Bunnie and Geoffrey down the road to their place to fix Bunnie's arm.

A short while later, Bunnie and Geoffrey arrived at Jessica's place, which was a lone stilt house that stood slightly above the sea and in no time, the cougar managed to fix Bunnie's robot arm. After fixing it back together, Bunnie gave her arm a flex to see if it would work and to her delight, it worked beautifully. It moved just as easily as it did before.

"Mah arm's all fixed." said Bunnie happily "Thanks a lot Jessica."

"You're welcome Bunnie." said Jessica.

"You know what you two." said Geoffrey "You both wanna become Royal Fighters, well I think you'd be very good Royal Fighters indeed. You both can fight really well despite your age and your energy powers could be very useful in battle. If you want to join us, you're free to do so."

Scott and Jessica beamed with pride.

"Thank you Geoff!" cried Scott happily "We'll join without a moment's hesitance! But does that mean we have to leave Adabat?"

"No not at all." said Geoffrey with a chuckle "You can stay here, you both live here after all. I'll just tell Queen Sally Acorn about you two and we'll see if she'll be willing to have you two join the Royal Fighters."

"That would be wonderful." said Jessica.

"Before we both go." said Bunnie, looking at Scott and Jessica "I just wanna say ah'm sorry ah didn't believe ya when ya'll told me about Ravage."

"That's OK Bunnie." said Scott kindly "You didn't know after all, you

haven't seen him in eleven years you say. I'm sorry I tried to beat you up earlier."

"It's OK sugah." said Bunnie "I hope to see ya both again some day."

"We hope so too." said Jessica "Bye Geoffrey and Bunnie."

"So long mates." said Geoffrey "And remember, you're both Royal Fighters now."

The four Mobians waved each other goodbye and Bunnie and Geoffrey left the house. After leaving the house and walking across the beach, the skunk and rabbit began to talk to each other again.

"Those two are good kids." said Geoffrey "They'll be very good Royal Fighters I can tell."

"Ah agree Geoffrey." said Bunnie "Ah just wish that my first meeting with Ravage in other eleven years didn't have to end in a fight. Ah can't shake the feeling that ah'm gonna see him again sometime soon and this time, it won't be a pleasant meeting."

"Well if the blighter comes back we'll be there to kick his butt again!" declared Geoffrey "And I'll make sure Sonic knows about Ravage so he'll be ready to kick his butt whenever we see him."

"Ah bet sugah-hog would make mince-meat outta Ravage." said Bunnie "But now Ravage is gone for the moment, let's enjoy the rest of our day-off. We have to be back to Mobotropolis by tomorrow."

"I'm with you on that one Bunnie." said Geoffrey and the two began running across the beach like excited children, ready to resume their day-off.

They would have to enjoy it while they could though because there was more danger to come and it would not be an easy threat to deal with...

And that's it for Trouble in Adabat! I...didn't really enjoy writing

this, I felt like I was severely lacking in this story and I think it needs a re-write in the future. But I digress, did you enjoy it? Read and Review.

The Life & Times of Fiona Fox 1

Arc 5: The Life and Times of Fiona Fox

Takes place before Story 64 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: Childhood, Failed Heroism and Life on the Lam

Fiona Fox had once been a member of the Royal Fighters Service but after being nothing more then a damsel in distress and just a hindrance to the service she quitted in order to save herself. The decision to do so seemed to have brought more harm then good to Fiona as she lost her house due to financial problems had had become a street rat, resorting to stealing in order to live, avoiding the cops and living in the middle of Rainbow Wood in Green Hill Zone. However, the young vixen's life was about to make a turn for either the better or the worse when Scourge the Hedgehog stepped into her life. She tried and failed to apprehend the green hedgehog and bring him to justice but instead, ended up joining Scourge in his plans for world domination. First, Fiona had to prove herself worthy of joining Scourge. She had demonstrated excellent punching and kicking abilities and now she was having a fight with Scourge to show him how strong she was in battle. Scourge's slimy sidekick, Ginger the Fox who was also Tails' brainless cousin watched as Scourge and Fiona fought it out with each other. Fiona had started off rather feebly and was getting beaten pretty easily by Scourge and the evil hedgehog let loose an onslaught of insults to deliberately make her mad and thus, make her more determined to beat him. The more Scourge insulted Fiona, the more effort she seemed to be putting into her fight and to Scourge's surprise, the fox was holding her own against him now. Fiona was proving to be tougher then she made herself out to be. Ginger had been enjoying the fight and wondered who was going to win. Fiona kicked at Scourge but the green hedgehog leaped out of her way and jumped towards her. He kicked her in the face and sent her staggering backwards. Fiona clutched her face and then suddenly ended up getting a face full of punches from Scourge. Fiona thought back with

a kick to the gut but Scourge easily recovered from the blow and kicked at Fiona, missing by inches as Fiona dodged him. Fiona kicked Scourge in the back, knocking Scourge onto his back and she tried to pin him down but Scourge reached behind him and grabbed Fiona's arm. He then flipped Fiona over his head and onto her back. Fiona picked herself up and lunged at Scourge but she unfortunately missed after Scourge ducked. Scourge then kneed Fiona in the gut and elbowed her on the back at the same time, giving Fiona a double dose of pain and the green hedgehog dropkicked her in the head, knocking Fiona off her feet and sending her rolling across the ground. The red vixen was truly battered and beaten and despite her best efforts, her strength was beginning to falter. Fiona tried and failed to get back to her feet and Scourge advanced on her menacingly with an evil grin on his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he crowed "Pathetic, absolutely pathetic Fiona! You have no skills whatsoever! You punch hard but you fall even harder! No wonder you were a lame Royal Fighter! I bet Sonic the Hedgehog would be very disappointed in you if he were watching this fight. You are a failure Fiona and that's all you'll ever be!"

Secretly, he was impressed at how Fiona had managed to hold out against him the past few minutes but he wanted Fiona to try harder so he tried the insults once again in order to make Fiona angry and desperate to beat him. Fiona was getting mad at Scourge's insults and somehow, she was getting her strength back.

"So Fi, got anything to say before I kick you out of this gang?" sneered Scourge.

"I…am…not…PATHETIC!" screeched Fiona.

She leaped back onto her feet and socked Scourge directly in the face before the hedgehog could even see her coming. But that didn't stop Fiona. She began punching Scourge over and over and over, not giving him a chance to fight back as she was moving much too fast for him to keep up with. Then Fiona yelled loudly and walloped Scourge in the face with a powerful kick, sending him falling onto his back and causing his sunglasses to fall off. The kick seemed to overwhelm Scourge as he was too stunned to get back up. He didn't know Fiona could be so strong when she wanted to be. Fiona then

pinned Scourge down to the ground and began having a hissy fit at the green hedgehog.

"How's this for pathetic Mr. Egotist?" yelled Fiona angrily "Now you'd better stop insulting me or I'm gonna do worse to you!"

Scourge shook off the amazing blow Fiona had dealt him and he looked at her. Fiona just remained scowling at the green hedgehog. Scourge grinned evilly at Fiona.

"You know what?" he said to her "You do know how to fight after all. That was brilliant stuff Fi! You really are ready to join me."

"Oh? I…I am?" said Fiona in surprise "Um…thank you."

She then released Scourge and helped the green hedgehog back onto his feet. Ginger applauded Fiona with a gormless grin on his face.

"Bravo Fiona! Well done!" he cheered "You belong with us now!"

"Thank you squirt." said Fiona sarcastically "So Scourge what do we do now?"

"We wait until tomorrow." said Scourge, lightly rubbing his arm "Me and you beat each other pretty badly so I think we need to chill out a moment. Besides, we have the element of surprise as no one expects us to be coming so we can let the plan sit aside for a while. Tomorrow, as they say, is just another day."

Fiona nodded agreeably. She couldn't wait to return to Royal HQ and get her own back on her former comrades for making her miserable and making her life turn into hell for her. And now she was teamed up with the baddest of bad, Scourge the Hedgehog, her revenge was certain and Sonic and friends would pay very dearly indeed…

Night fell and Scourge, Fiona and Ginger had found a nice warm spot somewhere in the forests of Green Hill Zone to sleep in so they could rest up for the big heist they had planned on Royal HQ

tomorrow*. Scourge and Fiona both lay against a tree whereas Ginger curled up on a dry patch of leaves and had already fallen asleep. The dorky fox was a pretty heavy sleeper and didn't take long to fall asleep. Scourge wasn't ready to fall asleep yet though, there were a few things about Fiona that he wanted to know about so he felt that now would be a good time to ask her.

"Hey Fi." said Scourge.

"Yes?" asked Fiona.

"I hope you don't mind but there's a few things on my mind that I wanna, y'know…ask you." said Scourge slowly.

"Oh really?" asked Fiona "Is it about the heist tomorrow and how I feel about joining you in it?"

"Well that's one of the things." said Scourge "How do you feel about joining me in a mission that involves me making your former buddies miserable?"

Fiona took the question in and thought about it for a moment and then gave her answer.

"If I was still good I'd probably feel bad about this." said Fiona thoughtfully "But my former comrades mean nothing to me now. I have nothing pleasantly memorable about them. All they did was put grief on me and make me feel like a sad sack of failure so I have no sympathy for anyone in the R.F.S."

"That's what I like to hear." said Scourge with an evil grin "So I guess you have no problems with me beating any of the Royal Fighters up?"

"Certainly not." said Fiona "I don't even care if you kill them! That's how much I disrespect the R.F.S. now, I wish doom on the service and I hope someone destroys the service."

"Well me, you and Ginger can make that happen!" laughed Scourge "Once I get Queen Sally's crown and throne I'll throw the R.F.S. into obscurity just to make you happy Fiona!"

"You're so sweet." said Fiona jokingly.

"Thanks I'm sure." said Scourge dryly "There's something else I wanna ask you though. What was your life like BEFORE you even became a Royal Fighter?"

Fiona was slightly taken aback by such an odd question. It seemed strange for an evil thug like Scourge to ask her something like that.

"What was my life like…why do you wanna know that then?" asked Fiona.

"Just interested." said Scourge casually.

"Oh, OK then." said Fiona, wrapping her arms around her legs and making a sad face, suggesting she didn't have a nice story to tell "I will warn you though that I don't have a happy story to tell you Scourge."

"Why do I care? Happy stories are for wimpy little kiddies." sniffed Scourge.

"OK then Scourge." said Fiona sadly "Allow me to tell you the story of my childhood."

The vixen breathed in deeply and then spoke.

"When I was a kid, I was at the bottom of the food chain." she said as memories from childhood began to come back to her "I was the subject of bullying because I was supposedly different. I didn't really see what was so different about me, even my parents thought that I was perfectly normal but the bullies claimed it was my fur colour because apparently at the school I used to go to, there were no Mobians with red fur around that area. Some of the bullying I received was just name calling whereas other times got quite extreme, especially if I told on them or tried to stand up to them. I became victim to all the bully clichés you can think of, wedgies, debagging, swirlies, the like. I had no friends and nobody liked me. I really didn't know if it was me or if it was them. Regardless, I'd grown to tolerate the bullying and I managed to do well in school. And then came the moment my life turned upside down."

"What happened?" asked Scourge, enticed in Fiona's story so far.

"When I became sixteen, my parents had just found me a collage to go to and I was thrilled." continued Fiona "We all decided to have a meal at a restaurant to celebrate my success. On the way to the restaurant though, a skunk woman dressed in a combat suit appeared from nowhere and…shot my parents dead." the vixen's eyes began to well up just thinking about that sad memory "I believe her name was Lola Gunn. After she killed my parents, she ran off after saying to me "Nothing personal kid, just business" and I was left in turmoil. What was supposed to be one of the happiest days of my life ended up becoming the darkest day of my life. And it was all because of that Lola Gunn person! What I wouldn't give to shoot her in the heart for what she did to my parents!"

She paused to wipe a trickling tear out from under her eye. Scourge, despite being the epitome of evil, was pretty touched by Fiona's heartbreaking story and all this made him more determined to improve the vixen's life while also getting his revenge on Sonic at the same time.

"So your parents got killed by Lola Gunn?" said Scourge "I've heard of her. She's bad news to anyone in her way. Well all bounty hunters are bad news to anyone in their way."

"I know." muttered Fiona "I don't even see why she had to shoot my parents though. They were of no harm to anybody, nor were they any particular threat to anybody."

"Well bounty hunters don't kill for no reason Fi." said Scourge "Lola must have had a reason and maybe if I run into her at any point, I can force her to spill the beans."

"Don't bother." muttered Fiona "It won't solve anything. Anyway, out of interest, what was your childhood like Scourge?" she suddenly asked.

Scourge had hoped Fiona wouldn't have asked him that as he didn't want to answer that question. The green hedgehog in the leather jacket just sighed and answered Fiona.

"My childhood was a constant battle." said Scourge "A battle for affection. When I was born my life was perfect and then a year later, my wussy brother Sonic was born and that changed everything. Sonic received a lot of love, even though I was far better looking and cooler then he is and me and him fought for our parent's affections. I would try to prove that I was the better son but no matter how many times me and Sonic fought, Sonic would often come out on top or our parents would interfere and tell me off as in their view, everything was my fault. It seemed that I would be second rate all my life until that eventful day when our dad took us for a visit to Angel Island. I came across the island's power source, a giant green emerald called the Master Emerald. I was so entranced by its beauty that I wanted to steal it. I touched the emerald and I suddenly got a great big power surge pulsing through my veins. That power surge is what made me the person I am now. I am Scourge the Hedgehog, the most awesome thing on the planet and soon to be world conqueror!"

"Well that was interesting." said Fiona, enticed with Scourge's story "What happened after you got that power surge from the emerald?"

"That power surge seemed to have had a bad effect on me because I became the evil tyrant I am now." explained Scourge "I don't know why though it just seemed to have had a negative effect on me. After I changed into the awesome guy I am now, I had this sudden urge to try and destroy things so I left the floating island and went on a rampage. I was about to target Castle Acorn and ransack it but Sonic stopped me. We had an epic battle which ended with him on top somehow. I was arrested and thrown in jail and I was kept there for two whole years. I managed to escape of course. I could have escaped anytime, it's just I felt that biding my time would have made my escape attempt less predictable and it worked like a charm**!"

"I'll say it did." said Fiona with an evil grin on her face "I mean, you're right here, right now telling me this tale of yours."

"Yeah." said Scourge with a devilish grin on his face "Well enough about me now, what was your life like WHEN you joined the R.F.S.?"

"The worst eight months of my life." said Fiona bluntly "On my very

first mission, I got caught and almost roboticized and all I did was just get bitten and beaten up***. Not a good first example at all!"

"I'll say." agreed Scourge "Thank god you're not that wimpy anymore or I'd be kicking your butt outta here right now."

"Yeah." mumbled Fiona "One of the worst moments of my R.F.S. career was my second mission. It all started when Geoffrey St. John, one of the recruits was training the newcomers Wilson and Mandy…"

Mobius: Eight months ago, a week after the destruction of Mobotropolis.

A whole week had passed since Dr. Eggman destroyed Mobotropolis**** and all the Royal Fighters did that past week was train up and prepare for Dr. Eggman's next attack. In the training hall, Fiona sat on the side bench and watched as Geoffrey began training the newcomers. Wilson and Mandy were a pair of stragglers that we saved from being roboticized and they had decided to join the service as they wished to fight against Eggman and save the world. They dog and mouse appeared to be catching on really well as they had joined the service with no combat skills of any kind before and they were suddenly able to kick some butt in a week's time. Geoffrey watched with astonishment as Mandy Mouse effortlessly managed to get through an obstacle course he had set up for the trainees. Mandy had learnt well indeed. Her friend Wilson watched as Mandy ploughed through the course, making sure to watch her every move so he'd be able to get through the course when his turn came. Mandy made it to the end of the course and finished off her amazing trial with a somersault in the air and she landed gracefully on her feet. Wilson clapped and Mandy bowed with pride. Geoffrey beamed with pride, pleased to see his hard work had been paying off.

"Well Mandy luv, I can't begin to say how amazing that was!" he complimented "You've learnt a lot from me haven't you?"

"Well I was a notoriously fast learner when I was in school." said

Mandy.

"Aren't we lucky to have a fighter like you on our side Mandy?" chuckled Geoffrey "If only all fighters could learn as fast as you could." he added bitterly, looking at Fiona who was just sitting on the bench not paying attention to anything.

The vixen just glared at Geoffrey, not caring what the skunk had to say or what he thought about her. Geoffrey was never really fond of Fiona, especially since she didn't appear to be a very good fighter. Geoffrey turned away from the scowling vixen and turned back to Mandy.

"You've done brilliantly Mandy. You may sit down and rest." the skunk said to her.

"Thanks Geoffrey." said Mandy, walking over to the side benches "I can't wait to finally get onto the battlefield and kick that Dr. Eggman's butt!"

Mandy sat down on a bench away from Fiona since the mouse and vixen didn't particularly get on very well but Fiona didn't care. She was used to being alone so the fact Mandy didn't want to sit with her didn't bother her. Geoffrey then spoke to Wilson.

"You're up next mate." he said "You ready?"

"Um…I think so." said Wilson nervously.

The dog hadn't been as quick a learner as Mandy due to his semi-skittish nature and lack of focus but he had been improving at least. After watching his best friend perform so flawlessly through the course he had a lot of confidence in himself that he'd be able to get through the course just like Mandy did. Wilson wondered over to the beginning of the course and was about to begin until they were interrupted by the sound of someone bursting through the doors. It was Nicole the Lynx, the Acorn family's lady-in-waiting and Mobotropolis beauty and she looked frantic as if a tornado was coming.

"Nicole luv, what is it?" asked Geoffrey.

"We've just received a message from Nekronopolis!" blustered Nicole "Dr. Eggman has been sighted there and it can be presumed he's up to no good there!"

"Talk about bad blooming timing!" muttered Geoffrey "Wilson and Mandy haven't even finished their training yet! Only Sonic, Bunnie and Fiona are free to go right now."

"In that case, I'll send Sonic, Bunnie and Fiona to do this mission." said Nicole "Fiona, come on dear." she called over to the fox on the bench "There's a mission for you."

"Really?" said Fiona "Good, hopefully I can redeem myself from the utter failure of my first mission."

She leaped off the bench and ran over to Nicole. The lynx took Fiona out of the training room, leaving Geoffrey to finish training Wilson and Mandy. Geoffrey turned back to Wilson and said.

"OK mate, whenever you're ready."

Wilson nodded nervously and started running through the obstacle course…

No sooner had Nicole informed Sonic, Bunnie and Fiona of what was happening, the four fighters were off to the Northern country of Nekronopolis to see what Dr. Eggman was up to. They had no idea what Eggman was doing in Nekronopolis, all they knew was that he had been sighted there and that meant trouble so they had to deal with it and fast. Sonic ran all the way to Nekronopolis whereas Bunnie carried Fiona and flew after Sonic so she could keep up with him. Sonic and the girls arrived at Nekronopolis in a matter of minutes and what they came across was just what they had expected. There was a large robot with Dr. Eggman piloting it and it was floating above the city ofNekronopolis. The robot looked like a large gold pod with three lasers mounted underneath it and four jet thrusters that the pod used to fly. The pod was shooting lasers down on the city and anyone hit by the laser had a horrible fate. The moment the laser hit them, their bodies were transformed from flesh

and bone to metal and oil. Eggman was roboticizing the helpless citizens of Nekronopolis and since Nekronopolis didn't have an R.F.S. group yet, no one could stand against Dr. Eggman. Eggman seemed to be having a merry time just blasting random citizens with his roboticizer machine.

"Bwah ha, ha, ha, ha!" he cackled "This flying roboticizer machine is a stroke of genius isn't it? Look how many Robians I'm getting just by floating above the city and shooting the citizens!"

"Even I think it's rather good sir." said his snivelling servant bot Alonzo "Your Robian army is growing by the second with every shot. Those snot-faced Royal Fighters won't stand a chance against you."

Alonzo should know better then to underestimate the Mobians as they were the ones who had brought down Eggman's battleship on his first encounter with the Mobians*****. Sonic, Bunnie and Fiona couldn't believe what they were seeing. Dr. Eggman really was a heartless brute wasn't he? Using a flying roboticizer machine was just going too far!

"OK, I didn't see THAT coming!" cried Sonic "But no matter, we have to stop it before it roboticizes the entire city!

"This mission seems easy enough." said Fiona happily "All we have to do is stop that machine and presto, we win."

"Ah wouldn't say that sugah." said Bunnie wearily "Those Robian critters look pretty darn nasty. They maybe a little hard to get past."

"If we're lucky, we won't have to fight the Robians." said Sonic "Bunnie can just fly up and attack the machine, I can leap off of buildings and attack the machine…"

"And what can I do? Stand there and look stupid?" said Fiona crossly.

Sonic stopped right in his tracks and his face fell. Fiona couldn't really do anything as she didn't have special powers or attacks of any kind so she was pretty much stuck on the ground watching Sonic and Bunnie kick some Eggman butt.

"Um…I'm sure we can find something useful for you to do." said Sonic "In the mean time, let's stop that machine before it roboticizes the whole of Nekronopolis."

Sonic, Bunnie and Fiona all charged out of their hiding place and they headed towards the city of Nekronopolis as Eggman fired another roboticizer beam. Dr. Eggman and Alonzo saw the Mobians coming and Eggman immediately got mad.

"Aw! Sonic had to appear didn't he?" moaned Eggman "And I was just beginning to have fun too!"

"Well if you don't want him to ruin your fun then shoot him with the roboticizer's cannons you moron!" snapped Alonzo "You can do that you know!"

"I know I can do that Alonzo!" snapped Dr. Eggman "I don't need you to tell me!"

Dr. Eggman pulled on the levers and two of the three lasers mounted underneath the pod rose up and fired a roboticizer beam at Sonic. Sonic, using his super speed effortlessly dodged the blast and he spin-dashed towards the machine. He hit the machine directly in the underbelly, sending it wobbling about madly and almost causing Dr. Eggman to fall out of the machine. Eggman regained control only to get blasted by Bunnie Rabbot's arm cannon. The attack had damaged one of the roboticizer cannons underneath the machine so Eggman only had two cannons to use now. Eggman got angry and he fired one of the roboticizer cannons at Bunnie, narrowly missing the already half-roboticized rabbit. Bunnie shot at the roboticizer machine again and hit it, making the machine shake and cause Eggman to almost fall out of it again. Sonic attempted to spin-dash the roboticizer machine but Eggman fired at him, forcing Sonic to deter away from him and land on a building. Sonic spin-dashed Eggman again and hit the machine again. Any citizen that hadn't been roboticized either ran inside to safety while they had the chance or stood and watched the battle. All the Robians on the ground looked up at Dr. Eggman and watched the fight that unfolded above their heads. They could sense that Dr. Eggman needed some help so they began climbing up the buildings so they could reach Eggman's roboticizer machine. Fiona Fox could see what they were

doing and came up with a brilliant idea.

"I may not be able to help Sonic and Bunnie stop Eggman's machine, but I can help keep the Robians off their backs." she deduced "It'll give them less things to worry about and leave them to brawl it out with Dr. Eggman."

She ran over to the climbing Robians and she called loudly to them. The Robian army stopped climbing and they saw Fiona calling over to them.

"Hey metal heads! Come and get me!" she jeered "Come and get me and take me to the roboticizer!"

After those taunts, she ran for her life. The Robians all growled mechanical growls and they climbed back down the buildings they were climbing up. They all chased after Fiona, the vixen already well ahead of them and heading for cover. Bunnie saw what was going on down below and she was amazed to see that Fiona was keeping the Robians away from them. The fox had managed to be of use after all. Eggman could see that Bunnie was distracted so he immediately tried to roboticize her but Sonic spin-dashed him before he had the chance. The roboticizer machine fell forward and fired at the ground instead. Eggman growled angrily and he tried to fire at Sonic once again. Bunnie transformed her cannon back to an arm and she gave the roboticizer machine a tremendous uppercut. Unfortunately, that uppercut made Dr. Eggman accidentally fire a roboticizer laser and the laser was heading towards Fiona! Fiona heard the laser firing and she looked over her shoulder to see what was happening. She saw the roboticizer beam heading towards her and she made a desperate dive out of the way as the beam seared past her. Unfortunately, leaping out of the way just gave the Robians chance to catch up to her and before Fiona could get back to her feet, the Robians all pounced on her and pinned her down to the ground. They then carried Fiona back towards Nekronopolis and towards Dr. Eggman, who was still trying to shoot Sonic and Bunnie with his roboticizer machine. Sonic spin-dashed the machine yet again and Eggman growled furiously.

"Why didn't I equip this thing with a missile launcher or something so I can fight Sonic easier?" he moaned.

"Maybe because you're such an absent minded turd you forgot?" suggested Alonzo unhelpfully.

Eggman just promptly threw Alonzo out of the machine and the butler bot landed with a crash on the ground. Alonzo was in pieces but that was nothing to worry about for Alonzo as he could just put himself back together (yes, I still don't know how he does it!) again. Dr. Eggman peered over his roboticizer machine and saw the Robians carrying Fiona towards him. He grinned evilly and stroked his thick bushy moustache.

"I remember that fox." he said "I almost roboticized her when I captured some Mobotropolis folk. Well it looks like I'll get another chance and this time, I'll succeed!"

As for Sonic and Bunnie, they landed on a building and watched as Dr. Eggman aimed a laser straight down at the ground. They looked at where Eggman was aiming and to their horror, they saw Fiona being held there by the Robian army.

"Fiona's in trouble!" cried Bunnie.

"Don't worry Bunnie, the hedgehog is on it." said Sonic as he spin-dashed towards Eggman's machine.

The roboticizer machine was about to fire at Fiona and roboticize her until Sonic hit the machine and sent it spiralling crazily out of control. The machine struck a building and made a hole in it, sending steel girders and rubble raining down on the ground. Bunnie flew down to the ground and she punched the Robians away, freeing Fiona from their grasp. Fiona fled for it while Bunnie distracted the Robian army. Eggman shook his head and tried to shoot Bunnie with a roboticizer beam but the lasers wouldn't work. Eggman furiously pressed the fire button.

"Why aren't they working?" cried Dr. Eggman "Alonzo!" he called down to the butler bot who had just finished putting himself back together "Why aren't the lasers working?"

"Well from what I can see." said Alonzo, looking at the underbelly of Eggman's machine "The lasers appear to be critically damaged.

Sonic must have hit them good and hard."

"Of all the things that can go wrong…GAH!" bellowed Dr. Eggman in fury "Alonzo, we're retreating! This mission is a flummox!"

A robotic arm extended down from under the roboticizer machine and grabbed Alonzo. The arm carried Alonzo back into the machine and it hovered away, leaving Nekronopolis behind. Sonic, Bunnie and Fiona watched as the machine hovered away and they decided not to hang around as there were a hundred Robians waiting to rip them to shreds. The Mobians all ran for it before the Robians could attack them.

"Well that went well." said Sonic "We stopped Eggman from roboticizing all of Nekronopolis."

"Yeah, pity I almost got roboticized again and ended up needing to be saved again." muttered Fiona.

"Ah come on sugah, yer still learnin' darlin'." said Bunnie kindly "With a few months practice, ya'll will be a much better fighter."

"Somehow, I don't think that'll happen." muttered Fiona as the three Mobians headed home for Mobotropolis…

"…and I was absolutely right." said Fiona "I didn't improve one little bit after my second mission. I was just a walking disaster in the R.F.S. I could never do anything right, I was always getting caught and always needing to be saved. I was nothing more then a damsel in distress."

"Wow, your life sucked in the R.F.S. didn't it?" said Scourge, who had listened to Fiona's story very closely "No wonder you quit."

"Yeah." mumbled Fiona, drawing lines in the soil beside her "I have no idea how I managed to live eight months being a walking bull's-eye but I'm glad I did. Anyway, eight months after I joined the service, I eventually quit."

"What happened after that?" asked Scourge.

"I went home and went back to my normal life." explained Fiona "I was actually quite happy until the day where I was stricken with financial problems. I got paid a lot in the R.F.S. but I had somehow managed to use up my fortune much to quickly and I ended up losing my house after failing to pay a rent."

"Ouch." said Scourge with sympathy "That seriously bites doesn't it?" You went through eight months of almost getting killed or roboticized and then you lose your house! You're seriously unlucky aren't you Fiona?"

"I know." said Fiona sadly "After losing my house, I ended up becoming a street rat and I had to steal to eat. I'm now a fugitive and I'm on the run from the cops."

"You told me that already." said Scourge "So what else happened in your life? Anything of interest? Anything noteworthy?"

Fiona thought of something else to tell Scourge and one very dark memory came back to her. She breathed in deeply and spoke.

"I was betrayed, and almost thrown in the brig because of it." said Fiona grimly as more dark memories began to come back to her…

Footnotes:

*** See Stories 64-67 of *STH: Heroes of Mobius* to see Scourge's plan in action!**

**** It sure did in *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 28!**

***** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 1**

****** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 2**

******* Again, see *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 2**

Looks like there's more to Fiona's life then what she's just told

us! So what other dark secrets has our luckless vixen got hidden in her soul? Find out next time as Fiona tells us a tale of betrayal and her current life...Reviews are welcome.

The Life & Times of Fiona Fox 2

Arc 5: The Life and Times of Fiona Fox

Takes place before Story 64 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2: Betrayal and Current Life

"You…were betrayed?" asked Scourge the Hedgehog, fascinated by that fact and interested to know what happened "By who?"

"A team of treasure hunters who work for an organization called H.U.N.T." explained Fiona Fox sadly "H.U.N.T. stands for "Hidden and Unified Nations in Treasure hunting" and they go around hunting treasures and stealing profits. I was given an ad about H.U.N.T. by a stranger in a mask and I read all about them. Desperate for cash, I ended up joining them. I can remember my first meeting with the team as if it were only yesterday…"

Fiona had been given an ad for H.U.N.T. by a stranger in a mask. The ad had the location of the team's office and their phone number. Seeing as how she was skint and she desperately needed some cold hard cash to go around with, Fiona instantly followed the directions on the map and found the office of one of H.U.N.T.'s star teams. The office was located behind the wall of a dark ally way and the only way to get into the office was to move a section of the wall. The wall was just a disguise so no one could track the teams of H.U.N.T. down and anyone passing by would just think it was a perfectly normal wall at the back of an ally way. Fiona moved the wall section and stepped through it. The wall closed behind her. Fiona found herself in a small corridor and there was only one door and that was at the end of the corridor. The door was brown, had a large window and had the logo for H.U.N.T. on it. Fiona walked down the corridor and knocked on the door.

"Come in." came a deep commanding, sounding voice from the

other side of the door.

Fiona obeyed and walked through the door. She found herself walking into an office. The office had a desk which seemed to be loaded with pretty looking jewels, treasures and money and a lot of chairs and a TV monitor. There were four people in the office. One was a cream coloured meerkat who was sitting at the desk, one was a sexy female purple raccoon who was sitting on a chair next to the desk, one was a huge muscular orange rabbit that was sitting next to the raccoon and the fourth was a grey furred bat that hung from the ceiling but seeing as they had a visitor, the bat came down from the ceiling to meet Fiona. The meerkat wore a wide brimmed hat with a black stripe on it, a short black cape that was held together by a thick wire, long brown gloves, brown shoes with steel attachments at the toe and a golden belt. The raccoon wore a black bodysuit that came up to the chest, thick leather boots and long black gloves. Her hair was styled in a ponytail, she had black and cream stripes around her eyes and her tail had black stripes. The rabbit only wore gloves and a green vest top and he looked like he could smash his way through steel due to his huge muscles. The bat didn't wear anything save for a metallic mask that had an ominous black visor for eyes and it amplified his voice and made it sound deep, growly and malevolent. His face had been horrifically scarred in an accident and he wore the mask to hide it. The meerkat raised the brim of his hat and he looked at Fiona with interest.

"My aren't you a beautiful one?" he purred "I like pretty girls and the fact there's one standing before me means this is my lucky day."

"Um…thank you." said Fiona slowly, blushing bright red.

"What are you here for honey?" asked the raccoon "And what's your name?" she added.

"My name's Fiona Fox." introduced Fiona "I was given an ad about you guys by a stranger in a mask and I've come to visit you."

"Have you now?" mused the meerkat "Well allow me to introduce ourselves. I am Lennox Meers, leader of this team and my associates are Roxy the Raccoon," Roxy pointed to herself as Lennox said her name "Owen Pounder the Rabbit," Owen cupped

his hand around his fist and flexed his biceps "and Alistair Drakken." the bat just pointed to himself as Lennox said his name.

"We are a team of treasure hunters that works for the glorious organization called H.U.N.T., Hidden and Unified Nations in Treasure Hunting." explained Lennox "We hunt for treasure and if you're here to hunt ours, we'll be forced to respond with brute force." he added threateningly, taking note that Fiona seemed to be interested in the piles of treasure and money on his desk that he needed to tidy away.

"Oh um sorry." said Fiona, quickly shifting her gaze back to Lennox "I'm not here to hunt your treasures at all. You see, I'm broke, completely broke sir."

"You're broke are you?" droned Alistair ominously, making Fiona jump and sending shivers down her spine "Isn't that a shame. We're broke ourselves. That's why we're treasure hunters. We need the money to go round with and we can never get enough so we hunt for our profits instead."

"If you can't get the profits then hunt for the profits. That's our motto." said Owen proudly, flexing his muscles.

"That's a cool motto." said Fiona "Anyways, since I'm broke, I thought that I could join you guys in treasure hunting so I can have some money to go around with."

"Well young lady, you've come to the right place." Lennox announced in delight "H.U.N.T. guarantees you more money then your wallet can handle since we hunt for the largest treasures, the rarest jewels and the most priceless of artefacts! I have to set a few ground rules for you though Fiona and you must abide to these or I will kick you out and wipe your memory clean."

"OK then." said Fiona nervously "W-what are they then?"

"One: you're one of us now so you stay with us and you are forbidden to leave under any circumstances." said Lennox "In H.U.N.T., you stay, you never go. Two: you must not talk to anyone about us or we're busted! H.U.N.T. is a top secret organization and if

we want to keep up our careers, we need people to remain in the dark about us. If you tell anybody about us, we will personally hunt you down and kill you! Third: when we hunt treasures, you must keep a low profile and follow our lead if you want to escape with your life should things go wrong. Finally: we decided how much profits you get from our steals. If you're not satisfied, tough. What you get is what you're given, nothing more and nothing less. I get the most profits because I'm the leader of course. Is that understood?"

"Perfectly." said Fiona "I'm yours now, I can't talk to anybody about you and I can't argue over the profits I get from your daily steals."

"Well done." said Roxy, clapping softly "You're now officially a member of H.U.N.T."

Lennox stood up from his desk and grabbed Roxy by her uniform. He jammed his face into hers, making the raccoon sweat nervously.

"I make the final verdict around here! Got it?" he snarled threateningly at the raccoon.

"Yes sir!" squeaked Roxy.

Lennox let the raccoon go. He turned back to Fiona and held his hand out for the young vixen to shake.

"Welcome to H.U.N.T. Fiona." he said with a smile.

Fiona shook the meerkat's hand eagerly. True she was still a convict but why did it matter? She was never going to improve so she may as well STAY a convict. Fiona couldn't wait for her first mission with her new friends…

"So you joined a secret treasure hunting group?" said Scourge with interest "Cool. I think I'd be a very useful ally to those guys if I joined H.U.N.T. So how did they betray you then?"

Fiona shuddered as if thinking about that fateful day gave her a bad feeling whenever she thought of it.

"Let me tell you of my first, and last, mission with H.U.N.T." said Fiona "I say last because that's when the betrayal happened."

"You got betrayed on your first outing with those guys?" cried Scourge "What jerks! And I thought Sonic was the only jerk on Mobius!"

"Well now you know of more jerks." said Fiona glumly "OK, my first mission. Here's the story…"

Fiona felt great. She had been on the run from cops for weeks on end and making no progress in her life but all that was at an end. True she'd still BE on the run from cops but now she had associates, she would be less likely to get captured and since she was with a treasure hunting team, she'd be able to get some money at long last. No more being poor for her! With H.U.N.T., she'd be the richest fox in the world! The only thing was, when were H.U.N.T. going to have their next treasure hunt? Fiona decided to ask Lennox.

"Hey Lennox, when do you guys do your treasure hunting?" asked Fiona.

"When our bosses give us a mission to do." explained Lennox "If our bosses have a job for us, they'll appear on the TV screen over there and they'll give us the scope. Once that happens, it's Operation: Hunt."

"We haven't had any missions in two whole days." droned Alistair "Sometimes we get lots of missions at once, sometimes we don't get a task for a while and we're left lounging around doing nothing."

"It's easy for you Alistair, all you do is hang around and sleep when we've got nothing to do." muttered Roxy.

"Good thing I have my own private gym to work out on when I'm bored." said Owen, flexing his muscles "As you can see, the workout's done numbers on me!"

"I'll say, you're biceps are huge!" exclaimed Fiona "May I?" she

asked, holding her hands out.

"Go ahead babe." said Owen, pulling a muscle.

Fiona felt the rabbit's enormous biceps.

"Oh they're rock solid!" she said "I bet you can beat a lot of cops up easily with muscles as hard as these!"

"That's why I'm the brawns." boasted Owen "I'm strong and I'm mighty. No one's a match for me! Although I'm smart enough to know when I'm outmatched."

"This may amaze you Fiona but, Owen maybe a big brute, but he's a brainy brute." said Roxy "I'm not kidding, Owen's got brains to match his brawn."

"Has he?" said Fiona "I'll test him, what's 780 times by…498?"

"388,440." replied Owen without a moment's hesitation.

"Oh my gosh!" blurted Fiona.

"Told ya honey." said Roxy with a smirk "Owen's usually the one that helps us get in and out of places due to his keen sense of calculation and breaking and entering."

"Regardless, it's usually me who makes the plans." said Lennox "Owen's better at workings out then strategy."

"Hey teammates, we've got a message incoming." reported Alistair, looking over at the TV screen which was fuzzing madly and going static.

The whole team gathered around to the TV monitor that hung on the wall and they watched intently as an image appeared on the screen. Fiona watched with them. An image of a shadowy figure sitting in a chair loomed on the screen before them. The figure's face was obscured by the darkness and all you could see were his legs. Fiona managed to make out from the shadowy image he was wearing a smart pair of black trousers but she couldn't make anything else out.

"Greetings Team Diamond." boomed the figure.

His voice was deep and masculine sounding, suggesting he was a formidable figure to come across in real life.

"Team Diamond?" asked Fiona.

"That's our team name." whispered Roxy.

"Greetings boss, what brings you on our screens?" asked Lennox, raising his hat and putting it back on.

"I have a task for you marvellous four." boomed the figure "Or should I say five since you appear to have a new member on your team?"

Fiona stood forward and bowed politely.

"Um…hello? My name's Fiona and I've decided to join this team." she said quietly.

"Wonderful!" cried the figure "I love it when we have another recruit for my organization! Proves that H.U.N.T. gets stronger as time goes by. Anyways, here is your mission Team Diamond. We have detected a large amount of priceless jewellery in the Mobian Store Department in Central City."

The figure's image was replaced by images of the jewellery store in the Mobian Store Department. The four treasure hunters stared in amazement at the sheer beauty of the jewels on offer. They were beautiful and priceless looking and anyone of those jewels would look good in their collection. Fiona stared at the beautiful jewels. Was she going to have to steal them? The figure returned onto the screen.

"These jewels are much too valuable to leave in store possession." boomed the figure "I am counting on you to liberate the store of those jewels and add them to our colossal treasure collection. Don't fail me or I'll take some of your recent steals out of your pay. Comprehended?"

"Every word of it sir." said Lennox, adjusting his wide brimmed hat

"We'll rob the store clean boss."

"Excellent. I'll await your report." boomed the figure "Good luck Team Diamond. You're going to need it in a store like that…"

The TV monitor then switched itself off and the screen went blank.

"Well team mates, let's get a move on." said Lennox "Central City, here we come."

"Wait." said Fiona before Lennox could leave "Who…who was that guy you were talking to?"

"Our boss." said Lennox "His name is anonymous and his appearance is anonymous so don't bother asking his name or anything. Even we don't know his name."

"So you just call him boss?" asked Fiona.

"Yeah." said Roxy "Or we call him sir or Your Excellency."

"Enough talk, the boss has given us a task and we must carry it out." hissed Alistair.

"I give the commands Alistair!" snapped Lennox "Let's go team. We've got a store to rob."

The team left the secret office and set courses for Central City. Fiona felt an excited tingle in her tummy. Her very first mission with H.U.N.T.! Maybe she'd do a much better job as a treasure hunter then a Royal Fighter! Pity this mission would end in disaster for her…

"You had to rob the Mobian Store Department in Central City?" asked Scourge, interrupting Fiona's story abruptly.

"Yes, why is that a surprise to you?" asked Fiona, annoyed that Scourge had just interrupted her.

"Me and Ginger robbed that place*." explained Scourge "We robbed

the whole place clean and blamed it on Sonic and Tails. The jewels are probably back where they are though since I hid them in Sonic's house and the cops went there to arrest him."

"Well that means H.U.N.T. can try and rob the store again." said Fiona "Or me and you can give it a go. Now where was I? Oh yes, we left the office and went off on our first mission…"

It had been a long trek from Empire City to Central City but Team Diamond had finally made it. Central City was the largest city on Mobius and it was full of residents and hover cars going this way and that. Broad daylight wasn't really the best time for a group of treasure hunters on a mission to rob a jewel store. But H.U.N.T. never backed down from a mission and they would carry it out regardless of what time of day it was. The four treasure hunters and Fiona weren't out in the streets with the crowds of people there. Instead, they hopped around from rooftops of buildings so no one would see them. Alistair didn't need to hop, he could just fly from building to building whereas the others just ran across the rooftops and hopped onto the next building as if they were a bunch of ninjas. Fiona was finding it hard to keep up as she wasn't so skilled in jumping from building to building and Lennox could see that the vixen needed some help. He sighed loudly and called Alistair over to him.

"Carry Fiona." he ordered "She's lagging."

"Yes sir." rumbled Alistair.

The mask wearing bat flew over to Fiona and grabbed her by the arms with his feet. He then lifted Fiona off the rooftop she was on and flew after his teammates. Fiona grumbled. She was needing help yet again but maybe a few more missions with H.U.N.T. and she'd be able to jump from building to building like Lennox, Roxy and Owen could.

After a while of leaping onto buildings and off again, they arrived at the Mobian Store Department. It was a huge building with a huge neon logo saying "Mobian Store Department" that could be seen for

miles around. The treasure hunters leaped onto the roof of the building and they bent down to make sure nobody could see them.

"OK you mugs, the MSD is bound to be crawling with guards so we have to do this quietly." said Lennox lowly "Owen, you find a way in."

"Yes Lennox." said Owen, plodding off to find a way into the building from where they were.

"When Owen busts us into the building, we crawl in and find the jewels" whispered Lennox "Roxy, you Alistair and Fiona will swipe everything off of every shelf and hand it over to me. I'll load them in these sacks and then we'll be off. Try not to set off any alarms or leave any evidence for the cops so it'll be harder for them to track us down."

"Got it." said Roxy with a delight grin on her face "I love it when I'm doing the best part of the steals and that's emptying the shelves!"

"I hope I don't screw up." said Fiona nervously, feeling unsure about the mission.

"If you screw up then you'll know about it." said Lennox coldly "Roxy will make sure you don't do anything wrong."

Then suddenly on the other side of the roof, there was a large pounding sound and the sound of metal being ripped away and thrown down on the roof. Owen had managed to find a way into the building.

"I've found a way in!" Owen called to his teammates.

"That was quicker then I expected." muttered Lennox "Oh well, here we go team."

The team all ran around to where Owen Pounder was. They could see that Owen had found a ventilation shaft in the roof and he had busted the hatch and moved it away so the others could get into the shaft. Lennox, Roxy, Alistair and Fiona all got down and their knees and crawled into the shaft.

"Keep an eye out for trouble." ordered Lennox.

"Yes Lennox Meers." said Owen loyally.

The butch rabbit stood to attention by the shaft and kept his steely gaze open for any signs of trouble. If trouble arrived, he'd be ready to plough his way through it with his unmatched strength.

In the shaft, the four jewel snatchers crawled through it, trying to keep as quiet as possible. They didn't want to alert anybody after all. Lennox came across a grate in the shaft and he peeked through it to see if they were close to the jewel store. He couldn't see the jewel store, only a row of toy stores and clothes stores. Lennox moved on with Roxy, Alistair and Fiona following closely behind him. The team came across another grate in the shaft and Lennox peered through that. He could see the jewels from the pictures his boss had shown him when giving him the mission. Lennox did have a photographic memory after all so he'd remember what ever he saw even after seeing it for only a few seconds. Now they had found the shop, Lennox kicked the grate and the grate fell through, allowing he and the others to drop down into the shop. Lennox, Roxy, Alistair and Fiona all dropped down through the shaft and into the shop. The shopkeeper was startled at the arrival of such people and he instantly panicked. Anyone coming in through the ventilation shaft was bound to be unfriendly and unfriendly, they were. Roxy ran over to the automatic door and she pressed a button near the door. The metal shutters closed down and covered the windows and the door, trapping the shopkeeper in with them and preventing anyone from seeing what they were doing. Anyone passing by would just assume the shop was closed and not suspect a thing. The only problem was that the shop was now dark and the treasure hunters couldn't see anything. Alistair had built in night vision in his mask so he could see where he was going. He flew over to the light switch and he switched the light on. The shopkeeper shielded his eyes as the lights came on. Lennox reached into a pouch in his cloak and he pulled out a revolver. The shopkeeper instantly panicked and tried to set off the burglar alarm but Lennox pulled the trigger and shot the shopkeeper dead. The shopkeeper's body slumped on the till. Lennox blew the smoke trailing out of the revolver's barrel away.

"This shop is now closed." he said to himself.

"Did you have to kill the poor guy?" asked Fiona, feeling sorry for the

innocent keeper.

"Yes I did." snapped Lennox "He tried to tip us off. And if I let him live, he'd tip us off the moment we left! Now he's dead, we're in the clear and once we rob this store, nobody will notice it's been robbed because they can't see through the shutters. They'll just assume the shop is permanently closed now stop wasting time and get swiping!"

Fiona did what she was told and ran over to the shelves. She grabbed as many jewels as she could in her arms and stuffed them into Lennox's sack. The meerkat in the wide brimmed hat's face was aglow as the sack was loaded with rich pickings. Roxy and Alistair grabbed as many jewels as they could and they quickly stuffed them into the sack.

"I love this part!" laughed Roxy "Emptying the shelves is so much fun isn't it?"

"It certainly is Roxy." droned Alistair malevolently as he stuffed a jewelled sceptre and a ruby into Lennox's now bulging sack "Our bosses will be pleased with our efforts. I'm amazed how easy a time we're having here."

"Security is tighter at night then it is in the day." said Roxy as she picked up some violet crystals and stuffed them into the sack "Although in the daytime you're likelier to be seen which is why I closed the shutters. No one can see us now."

"Stop talking and get on with the robbing!" snapped Lennox "Time is of essence here!"

Roxy and Alistair remained quiet as they grabbed more jewels and stuffed them in another sack. The first sack had been stuffed full of jewels so Lennox needed the other sack. He knew there were too much jewels to stuff in one sack so he brought two sacks with him. Fiona grabbed some jewels and stuffed them into the sack. The shelves were completely empty. There were some jewels still left and they were encased in a glass display so the customers could see them and decide which ones they want.

"What should we do about this handsome?" asked Roxy.

"I'd be careful if I were you." warned Lennox "Breaking the glass might set off the alarm so we can't break it. I'll see if I can cut my way through the glass."

"Allow me boss." boomed Alistair in his deep growly voice which was made more reverberant by his mask.

He drew out a claw and he scratched the glass. Fiona clutched her ears as Alistair made a horrible screeching sound with his claw as he drew it across the glass. He drew his claw all the way down to the end of the display and then he circled around and drew his claw back to the beginning. After that, he dug his claw under the glass he had cut and he lifted it off the display and gently set it down on the floor, being careful not to break it. Now the jewels were free for the members of H.U.N.T. to snatch out of their places and pack into the sack. Fiona decided to just stand there and let them help themselves as Roxy and Alistair packed the sack with the jewels on display. They would move on to the second glass case and then steal the jewels from that and once they stole those jewels, they would sweep out of the room with their steals and run back to the office and report their triumph to the boss. Fiona then noticed the dead body of the shopkeeper which lay slumped against the till on the desk. Blood was trickling out of the wound in his chest. If they just left the body of the shopkeeper there, the body would rot away and the smell of rotting flesh would attract some attention so Fiona thought it would be a sensible idea to hide the body. So Fiona wondered over to the body and picked it up. She hauled the body away from the till and carried him past the display case. Lennox saw what she was doing and scowled at her.

"Fiona! Put that down!" he shouted "We're not taking the body with us!"

"But if we leave him here, his body will rot away and the smell of rotting flesh might catch someone's attention and make them investigate." noted Fiona "I'm only disposing of him."

"You are not doing anything of the sort." said Alistair darkly.

He reached into Lennox's cloak pocket and whipped out a shot gun he kept for spares should he lose his revolver. He flew over to the

body of the shopkeeper and placed the gun in the shopkeeper's hand.

"There, now anyone who finds him will think he shot himself." droned Alistair.

"Wow, you guys are geniuses." said Fiona with awe.

"Thank you honey." said Roxy "That's why we're the best of the best."

Fiona nodded and she tried to walk away from the body but she accidentally got her foot caught up in the shopkeeper's leg and she fell forward. She held her hands out to save herself and she hit the glass case on the second display row. Unfortunately, the case cracked. Fiona quickly withdrew her hands but those cracks from her hands hitting the glass were more then enough to set off the burglar alarm. The entire room turned red as red lights flashed and the sirens blared loud enough to deafen a million people at once. The shutters opened up so any policemen could get in. Lennox, Roxy and Alistair gasped in horror as the sirens blared. Lennox glared at Fiona and he grabbed her by the neck.

"You clumsy little slut!" he bellowed "You've given the game away!"

"I-I-I'm sorry." said Fiona with her ears drooping back in fear.

"It's too late for that now!" snarled Lennox "We've gotta flee for it! Roxy, Alistair! Forget the jewels, we have to flee!"

Roxy and Alistair put back whatever jewels they had in their hands.

"Why are we leaving the goods behind then?" asked Roxy.

"We're letting Fiona take the rap." said Lennox with a cold stare at the vixen "We'll be in the clear and she'll be in a cold dark cell to serve as a lesson to those who expose us and ruin our heists!"

"What?" cried Fiona "You can't just leave me behind like that! I'm one of you now!"

"Not anymore." said Lennox coldly.

He pulled out a rope with some balls attached to it and he threw it at Fiona's ankles. The rope wrapped around Fiona's ankles and the vixen tripped up. She tried to move her legs but she couldn't for they were now tied up. Lennox leaped up to the ventilation shaft and he gripped the open grate. He pulled himself into the shaft and frantically crawled through it. Alistair flew into the shaft and followed Lennox. Roxy leaped to the shaft and caught the open grate. She pulled herself into the shaft but before she could go, Fiona called to her.

"Roxy! Please! Help me!" begged Fiona "Don't leave me behind! Please! Get me outta here!"

"Get yourself out sunshine!" snapped Roxy with an icy glare at the fox.

She closed the grate behind her and crawled off, leaving Fiona behind in the jewel store as the policemen arrived on the scene to arrest her. Fiona could do nothing but remain on the floor in horror as the police broke into the store.

On the roof, Owen could hear the commotion and could see police cars surrounding the department store and was beginning to wonder what went wrong. He then heard the sound of Lennox, Roxy and Alistair crawling frantically through the shaft. The meerkat, raccoon and bat all crawled out of the shaft and Owen closed the shaft up quickly.

"What happened?" asked Owen "The police are surrounding the building! It's absolute chaos down there!"

"Fiona's clumsiness cost us the mission." stated Roxy "We've been forced to leave our goodies behind so we can blame it all on Fiona."

"Won't Fiona tell on us though?" asked Owen.

"They won't believe her." said Lennox, lowering the brim of his hat "They don't know we exist and Melchett has a horrible habit of never believing a word criminals say, even when they're telling the truth."

"So she's dead meat in there." rumbled Alistair.

"Yes." said Lennox "She's no longer one of us now. Let's go and report to the boss."

"If I loss half of my pay check because of that witch Fiona, I will murder her!" growled Roxy as the treasure hunters fled the scene.

Back in the jewel store, Fiona had managed to cut herself free by using a shard of glass but she was now surrounded by policemen. Desperate to escape, Fiona threw a diamond at the grate and the diamond knocked the grate into the shaft. Fiona climbed into the shaft and crawled away just before the cops could grab her. She couldn't believe how horribly wrong this mission had gone and how her new friends had deserted her. Well from this day forward, she would rely on no one and be a loner from now on…

"…and that's how it happened." said Fiona grimly, tears forming in her eyes "Left behind and blamed for the whole ordeal."

"Whoa." said Scourge "Those guys are jerks! They dumped ya and left ya to take the rap just because you made one little mistake? I know I'm evil but even I'm not THAT cruel!"

"Ever since that day, I've decided to stay alone." said Fiona "I tried to rob jewels myself, even though I never succeeded, and I spent the rest of my life on the run and stealing to eat. I swore I would never rely on anyone again and I would just be a treasure hunter in my own rights. That is…until I met you Scourge."

"Yeah." said Scourge "You're relying on me now so what was that whole business about not relying on anyone about?"

"I thought that originally but after meeting you, I feel like I need someone." said Fiona "Someone to talk to about my problems, my heartbreaks and to help me recover from my wounds. You seem to be that person Scourge as I've just gone about the story of my life to you and you've listened to me and you're willing to do what it takes to help me get my own back on the R.F.S. and all who have wronged me."

"That's me baby." said Scourge with a malicious grin on his face "Anyone that messes with you now, messes with the hedgehog! I will make sure Sonic, Lola and H.U.N.T. pay for all they've done to ya!"

"Wow Scourge, for someone as evil as you, you seem to care about me a lot don't you?" asked Fiona "And to think you were about to kill me earlier."

"Well Fiona you're cool, you look cool and only the coolest of cool can hang out with me." said Scourge who appeared to be in another mindless brag about himself "Not to mention I think you're hot and I think you'll be much more competent then Ginger. I think me and you will go on to have a beautiful partnership."

"I think so too." said Fiona dreamily.

Before Scourge could figure out what Fiona was about to do right now, the vixen bent over to Scourge and her lips ended up meeting his. Scourge was shocked by that sudden kiss but he was shocked in a good way and instead of pushing Fiona off of himself and yelling angrily at her, he returned the kiss and wrapped his arms around her. The two villains embraced by the tree under the shining moonlight as the night went on. Fiona's life had been hard and rough but tomorrow, with thanks to Scourge the Hedgehog, her life would improve and she'd be able to get her own back on all who have wronged her. Sonic the Hedgehog and the R.F.S., H.U.N.T. and Lola Gunn would all pay for making her life miserable starting with tomorrow when she joined Scourge and Ginger on a heist on Royal HQ…

See *STH Heroes of Mobius:* Stories 64-67 to find out what happens next!

Footnotes:

***See Stories 33-35**

Annnnnnnnnnd that's it for Fiona's backstory! So what do you think? Is this Fiona better then Archie's Fiona or have I just ruined her character? Read and Review and tell me what you think.

Tune back into Heroes of Mobius as H.U.N.T. meets Sonic the Hedgehog!

The Five Festivals of ChunNan 1

Arc 6:The Five Festivals of Chun-Nan

Part 1 (Takes place four days before Story 68)

Every so often, the peaceful, holy country of Chun-Nan would have a week of parades and festivals to celebrate certain elements and events. These were known as the Five Festivals of Holy Honour and the festivals were arranged by the emperor of Chun-Nan. Since Emperor Dalon Tai was the current emperor, he was arranging this years five festivals. He had been the organizer for the Five Festivals of Holy Honour for twenty years, the same number of years he had been emperor for and this year would be Tai's twenty-first contribution to this weekly celebration. The Five Festivals of Holy Honour went as follows:

Day 1: The Festival of the Rising Sun, a festival to celebrate the sun and its warm loving light.

Day 2: The Festival of the Running Waters, a festival to celebrate the waters of Mobius and it's purpose in life.

Day 3: The Festival of the Breezing Winds, a festival to celebrate the blowing wing that could bring destruction or grace depending on it's moods.

Day 4: The Festival of the Raging Fire, a festival to celebrate the fires and the joy it can bring when used properly (eg. fireworks, lights and lamp parades).

Day 5: The Festival of the Holy Earth: The final festival of the celebrations to celebrate the very earth on which the people walk on.

The Five Festivals often brought great joy and immense happiness to the people of Chun-Nan. Sadly, that all seemed to be coming to an end. For on the first day of the Five Festivals, the Festival of the Rising Sun had ended in total catastrophe. The lights used for the

light parade which was part of the celebration had all exploded and caused a giant blackout that put everybody in panic. Tai couldn't understand what went wrong. The Five Festivals NEVER went wrong! He had put his all into planning these wonderful festivals and the first one ended in disaster! It was such a surprise to everybody that news soon spread out about the first festival going utterly wrong. Such news had caught the attention of a young superspy named Sora. Sora was a blue furred twelve year old fox with lavender hair styled in a ponytail and some of it drooped over her forehead. She had green eyes and wore indigo coloured gloves with a purple triangle on them, heeled shoes that were black and purple in colour and a utility belt with a strap that went around the shoulder. The shoulder strap was full of little orbs that helped the young spy in her missions. Despite her young age, Sora was top of her class. She had been trained at a young age by a superspy and now she was at her teacher's levels. Sora worked for a secret organization known as the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit or M.S.I.U for short. This organization fought hard to purge the world of evil and immorality and the organization had been a brilliant success. Dr. Eggman had given the organization some trouble as he was hard to breach but they were determined to stop him for good. Right now, Eggman wasn't the problem, right now Sora was investigating the sudden blackout the Festival of the Rising Sun had had. Her agent, a raccoon named Ricardo had spied on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan, a clan of shadow cats that preyed on the weak and robbed whatever they could get their paws on. The raccoon had had a feeling that the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was responsible so he had gone to investigate to see if his suspicions were true. Ricardo unfortunately appeared to have been captured as Sora lost all contact with him. Worried about her agent's safety and wellbeing, Sora had decided to go and investigate this case herself. So she hired a cab and the cab driver drove her all the way to Chun-Nan. Once he arrived, he would take Sora to Ricardo's last recorded position and Sora would investigate the whole thing. It had been a very long drive but the cab driver had arrived at last. He arrived at a temple that stood proudly on the outskirts of Chun-Nan itself. The temple was as shadowy looking as the Yīnyǐng Mao itself and it looked very impressive and terrifying at the same time.

"Alright darling we're here." said the cab driver "Right we you hired

me to bring you. I wish I knew why though."

"I'm looking for Agent Ricardo Ringtail." said Sora, who was sitting comfortably in the back.

"You mean the raccoon guy that you sent to investigate the disaster of the Festival of the Rising Sun here?" asked the cab driver.

"Exactly." said Sora, unclipping her seat belt and opening the car door "I lost contact with that feisty guy and I wish to see if his health is in good condition."

"Well sweetheart, you'd better be careful in there." said the driver as Sora left the car "If Ricardo, one of our best agents is in danger then this Yīnyǐng Mao clan must be a dangerous mercenary."

"Danger, is my specialty Carlos." said Sora "Don't worry about me. You wait here and pick me up when I emerge from the temple."

"Alright Sora, I'll see you soon." said Carlos as Sora headed off to the demonic looking temple.

Sora gave him a thumbs up sign over her shoulder without even looking back at the driver. Sora wondered up to the temple and looked up at it. The height of the temple was immense. Not that Sora minded, heights didn't bother her. She'd been trained to spy in tall buildings and spy from high places all her life so this was nothing to her. Sora pulled an orb off her belt and aimed it up at the roof of the temple. She pressed a button and a grappling hook fired out of the small, steel orb. The hook shot straight up and embedded itself into a section of the roof that stuck out a little. Sora pulled the rope to make sure it was tight and she pressed another button on the orb. The rope of the hook began to wind back up but since the hook was embedded into the roof and Sora was holding the orb, the rope pulled Sora up off the ground and up towards the roof. The rope wound back up and up until it reached the end of the line and Sora was up at the roof. She gripped the tiles of the roof and pulled herself onto it. Sora crawled onto the roof and up to a big orange window. Windows were no obstacle for a spy like her. Sora pulled a pen knife from her belt and she cut a neat circle into the glass. She then licked her hand and placed it on the circle she had cut.

Because she had licked her hand, the glass stuck to it and she neatly pulled it out of the circle. She put the glass down quietly and she climbed through the circle. Sora found herself in what appeared to be an attic. It was full of crates and boxes that were full of goodness knows what. Sora crept over to a box and opened it. The box was full of weapons ranging from katanas to nunchakus to bo staffs and many more. Sora had a feeling these weapons were important so she pulled an orb from her shoulder strap, which was a miniature camera and she took photographs of it. She then looked into another box. That box was full of weapons too. Sora photographed them as well. She then looked into crate marked with the words "CAUTION: EXPLOSIVE!". The crate was full of explosive looking equipment and one item particularly caught her interest. It looked like a paper lantern that would be let off in the Festival of the Breezing Wind for the wind races but it had a bomb inside of it. Sora photographed it.

"Why is there a bomb in a paper lantern?" she mused to herself.

"Hey Chi-Po! Get those crates and boxes out of the attic!" came a voice that made Sora jump and almost drop her camera "The master demands them now!"

"OK, OK Farr Hong! Don't get your tail in a twist!" grumbled another voice.

Sora immediately leaped for cover behind a bunch of boxes and reattached the orb-cam to her shoulder strap. A door in the floor of the attic opened up and in stormed a cat wearing traditional ninja attire. He didn't look very happy at all. This job clearly seemed to annoy him a lot. The cat grabbed the crate that Sora had just looked in and carried down the ladder. Then he came back up and carried some more crates and boxes that Sora hadn't looked in yet but Sora assumed there was something bad in them. The cat came up one last time and grabbed the last few crates that were left. The only stuff left in the attic were the boxes Sora was hiding behind. The moment the cat left the attic, Sora followed him quietly. She climbed down the ladder and saw two cats walking off down the hall with the boxes and crates. Sora had to find out where they were going so she followed them quietly. She came to the end of the hall and opened a door that opened sideways. She saw a wooden barrier,

meaning that this must be a balcony of stairs that led down to the floor below. Sora crept up to the banister and peeked through the wooden poles. She could see a horde of ninja cats down below all piling the crates and boxes together as if they were preparing to go somewhere. Sora took the camera off her strap and photographed the scene before her.

"Boy, I've got a lot of photos for M.S.I.U. headquarters!" she muttered to herself.

The one thing that bugged her is what was going on? Boxes of weapons, paper lanterns with bombs in them, explosive equipment? What were the Yīnyǐng Mao up to? Then suddenly down below her, a door opened and another ninja cat walked into the room. This cat wore ninja attire just like the others did but he also wore a chest plate with added circular shoulder pads and a vest coat that flowed behind him as he walked. He had a crescent moon shape on his forehead. This cat, of course, was the Yīnyǐng Mao clan leader Fong Zarr. He had once been bribed into working for the notorious Zira the Ruthless* but now she was incarcerated, he was free to do his own thing again and it looked like he had big plans right now. The cats all looked up from their work and saw Fong Zarr walking into the room.

"Make way." announced Fong Zarr loudly "There's too many cats here, out of my way scrrrubs."

Sora stared at him in interest.

"I'm willing to bet he's their leader." she said to herself, taking a photograph of him with her orb-cam "I wonder what he's up to now."

Fong Zarr strode up to the pile of crates and boxes and admired them proudly. He looked like he was about to purr happily.

"Me-ow." he purred "You've done a good job with the supplies cats." he said to his minions "The master will be verrry pleased with this stock of ours."

"Master?" mused Sora "So is he not their leader or something?"

She continued to listen on as Fong Zarr and the ninja cats continued working. Fong Zarr opened a crate of explosives and looked into it. His furry face lit up with pride.

"Ah, you got the exploding paper lanterns the master ordered!" he cried happily "I knew I could rrrely on you cats to meet the master's demands!"

"It was nothing Mr. Zarr." said one of the ninja cats "A paper lantern with a bomb in it isn't exactly the hardest thing to make is it?"

"I suppose not." said Fong Zarr "Oh well, ninjas, get ready to ship this lot to the master! We must be ready in time for the Festival of the Running Water tomorrow night!"

"Hmm…" hummed Sora "This sounds interesting. Looks like Ricardo's suspicions were correct. The Yīnyǐng Mao are responsible for the disaster at the Festival of the Rising Sun."

Suddenly, all the cat's work was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a ninja cat carrying somebody. Sora immediately looked at the cat through her orb-cam. To her horror, the person the cat was carrying was none other then her agent Ricardo Ringtail. His body was caked in blood and he had sword wounds all over his chest and stomach. He was clearly dead. Sora's mouth dropped in horror and she dropped her orb-cam. The tiny orb rolled across the landing and stopped in front of a wooden plank that stuck up from the floor slightly. Sora quickly grabbed the orb-cam and photographed the cat holding the dead Ricardo in his hands. The cat marched up to Fong Zarr and threw the bloodied body of Ricardo at his feet. Fong Zarr looked down at him and grinned maliciously.

"So I take it you found somebody sticking his nose in where it didn't belong?" he purred.

"I did indeed Fong Zarr!" said the cat wickedly "He was spying on our stuff in the attic so we all drew katanas and ran him through enough times to use him as a knife block!"

"I can see with all these wounds on him." chuckled Zarr "That'll teach those fools to send people to spy on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!"

Sora felt sick hearing this. The ninja cats just blatantly killed poor Ricardo just because he was spying on them! She'd better make sure she never gets caught by those evil cats or she was toast! Sora decided now would be a good time to leave. But she had to find out more about what was going on. But she couldn't risk getting caught, she had to go before she ended up like poor Ricardo. Sora got up off her knees and was about to leave until she accidentally bumped into a ninja cat in the doorway. The cat immediately seized Sora and clasped a hand around her mouth. The cat ran down the stairs at lightening speed and stopped in front of Fong Zarr. The clan leader looked up from Ricardo's horrendously stabbed body and at the cat holding Sora. The cat threw Sora at the clan leader's feet. Sora looked up at Fong Zarr and began shaking. Her ears drooped back in fear. Fong Zarr stared at Sora and snorted at her.

"Who's this child?" he snarled.

"Another one sticking her nose in where it didn't belong." said the cat "I think she was spying on you and your ninjas while you were loading these crates."

"So you've been listening to me this whole while have you?" snarled Fong Zarr, drawing out a pair of katanas "Well you little insect, you will not live to tell the tale!"

Sora immediately panicked and she pulled something out of a pouch of her belt. It was a thin tube that sprayed a very irritable substance. Sora sprayed it in Fong Zarr's eyes and the clan leader screamed in pain as his eyes suddenly began throbbing. The ninja cats all dived towards Sora but the fox leaped out of their way and ran towards the stairs. She pulled an orb off her strap and threw it down the stairs after climbing up them. The orb emitted a very thick puff of smoke that filled the whole room, obscuring the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's vision. Fong Zarr rubbed his eyes better only to find the room was covered in smoke. However, he managed to spot Sora running across the landing at the top of the room through a thinner patch of smoke.

"The spy is getting away! KILL HER!" bellowed Fong Zarr.

The cat's obeyed and they ran through the smoke and they managed to find the staircase. They all ran up the stairs and after

Sora. Sora was already halfway down the hall by the time they made it up the stairs and she leaped up to the ceiling and pulled down the ladder that you had to climb up to get into the attic. Sora climbed up the ladder and pulled it up after herself to slow the ninja cats down. The cats all saw Sora pull up the ladder so they knew where she was. They pulled the ladder down and climbed up into the attic. By the time they made it though, Sora was already climbing out of the window and crawling down the roof. Her grappling hook orb was still there and she grabbed the orb. She pressed a button and the rope began to extend, causing her to descend quickly down to the ground. Desperate to kill her, one of the cats drew out a shuriken and threw it at the rope. The shuriken snapped the rope and Sora began to fall. She wasn't even halfway down yet so she had a long fall, a fall that would kill her. Luckily, Carlos had seen Sora falling and he drove the cab up to catch her. The roof opened up and Sora landed with a thump on the back seat. Sora sat herself up straight and Carlos looked over to her.

"What's going on Sora?" he shrieked "You look like someone's trying to kill you!"

"Carlos, when you're a spy everybody's trying to kill you!" snapped Sora "Now get me out of here! Now! The Yīnyǐng Mao clan is after me!"

"Okey Dokey! No problem!" said Carlos frantically, stepping on the pedal.

The car roared into life and zoomed off away from the temple. Unfortunately, that didn't mean her escape was inevitable. One of the ninja cats had lit up a firework and aimed it at the car. The firework screamed and roared as it shot out of its post and soared towards the cab. Sora saw it coming and she leaped out of the car just before the firework could hit it. Poor Carlos, wasn't so lucky. The firework smashed through the car and destroyed it in a millisecond. The car erupted into flames and debris. Sora looked over her shoulder sadly at the car wreck.

"Oh Carlos." she said sadly with a tear in her eye "You were a great cab driver."

This was not the time to be mourning somebody; Sora had to flee for it and fast before the smoke cleared. In order to fake her death to throw the Yīnyǐng Mao clan off, Sora removed her shoes and placed them near a flaming piece of metal. To anyone watching, it would look like she had been crushed by the debris and burnt alive. To add extra realism, she lay a glove at the side of the metal to give the appearance of one of her hands was sticking out from under the metal. Sora then ran for her life. Two ninja cats ran over to the wreckage of the car and they waited for the smoke to clear. They saw a flaming car wreckage, the dead body of Carlos the cab driver and Sora's shoes and one of her gloves sticking out from underneath the wreckage. To them, it looked like that Sora had been crushed by the debris and was now being burnt underneath it. They smiled evilly.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" they laughed as they walked away from the wreckage.

The moment the cats left, Sora ran back to pick up her shoes and glove and she ran for her life. She had one heck of a story to tell the M.S.I.U. when she returned back to headquarters. As for the two cats that had investigated the wreckage, they reported their find to Fong Zarr.

"We blew the spy's car up with a firework." reported one of the cats "She's dead sir. Dead as a dumpling."

"Wonderful!" cried Fong Zarr happily "Now two spies that have spied on us are dead, they cannot sell us out to anybody! Nobody can stop us now! Not even those ingrrrates Bladefeather and Mushu! The Yīnyǐng Mao clan is unstoppable!"

And with that, he cackled with laughter. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan's plot was in motion and it seemed that tomorrow, the very next festival would end in disaster and if it did then the Five Festivals of Holy Honour had no chance of being happy for anybody…

The next morning, Emperor Dalon Tai and his beautiful daughter Princess Matilda, who was secretly a kung-fu warrior, were visiting a

kung-fu stadium where kung fu masters Bladefeather the Falcon and Mushu the Iguana were having a training match. The person organizing the match was a porcupine named Gāng Émáo bǐ, his name meaning "Steel Quill" referencing the fact he had quills literally made of steel all over his back. He was an elderly kung-fu master dressed in a wealthy looking robe and he wore a bandana around his head that had a logo on it. The logo was the face of a porcupine proudly displaying his quills. Gāng was not only a kung-fu master, but he was Bladefeather and Mushu's mentor. The two kung-fu masters met each other when they signed up to Master Gāng's kung-fu lessons and thanks to the porcupine, they became best friends and two of the best kung-fu warriors in Chun-Nan. Right now, they were having a friendly training match to show Master Gāng how much they had progressed since their lessons with him. Mushu lunged forward with a punch or two at Bladefeather and the falcon blocked the blows with his wings. Bladefeather drew a pair of daggers out and he tried to attack Mushu with them but Mushu grabbed Bladefeather's arms and held them in place, preventing him from touching the iguana with his daggers. Mushu then proceeded to head-butt Bladefeather and push them away. Bladefeather threw his two daggers at Mushu but the iguana dodged the daggers and tried to tail whip Bladefeather but the falcon jumped over his tail as he swung at him. Bladefeather grabbed Mushu's tail and threw him to the other side of the arena. Mushu just managed to stop himself from falling out and he charged back towards Bladefeather. Bladefeather leaped up into the air but Mushu leaped up after him and tackled the falcon down to the ground. He grabbed Bladefeather's arms and held them in place, pinning the falcon down and preventing him from moving. Bladefeather smiled at Mushu.

"Good show old friend, you refuted me this time." he said "Your skills have unequivocally progressed since our first lesson with Master Gāng. Yes, your improvement is very perceptible indeed."

Mushu just smiled back at his friend and helped him back onto his feet. Tai and Matilda both clapped at the kung-fu masters.

"Excellent show you two." said Tai with a bright smile on his kind face "Watching you two makes me wish I could get out there and learn kung-fu with you. Just a pity I have a crippling arthritis in my

back so I can't learn kung-fu." he muttered, rubbing his back grimly.

"That's why I had to learn kung-fu for him." Matilda said to Master Gāng "Daddy can't defend himself due to his weak back so I had to learn kung-fu in order to defend him and the Pagoda of Prosperity. I would have preferred it if I didn't have to though. I hate violence."

"I know you do child but sometimes, violence is required for the situation at hand." said Master Gāng "You only have to resort to violence if you have to, not if you want to."

"I know." said Matilda "My master taught me that."

"Speaking of master, who is your tutor princess?" asked Master Gāng.

"I'm not allowed to say." said Matilda "He's forbidden me to say his name. He wishes to remain anonymous."

"Ah, a vigilante kung-fu master." said Master Gāng "I don't often hear of those, they're hard to come around due to their secrecy. So Matilda, would you mind if you showed me some of your kung-fu abilities?"

"Um, no Master Gāng." said Matilda, bowing respectfully before the kung-fu porcupine "What do you wish for me to do?"

"I have a suggestion Master Gāng." said Bladefeather, putting his wing up "How about pitting the princess in a friendly match with me and Mushu. Don't worry, we won't be too callous on her."

"Bladefeather, Mushu, I don't want to senselessly hurt you two for the fun of it." said Matilda respectfully "It's dishonourable."

"Dearest, you're not senselessly hurting them." noted Tai gently "It's only a training match, you're not in a real fight Matilda."

"OK then." said Matilda, stepping towards the arena "I'll try not to hurt them too much."

Matilda stepped into the arena and prepared for battle. Bladefeather and Mushu bent down in battle ready stances, ready to pounce on

the mongoose princess.

"I hope you're prepared my elegant rose." crooned Bladefeather "We may be too much for you to handle."

"We'll see about that." said Matilda quietly, waiting to make her move.

Mushu made the first move on the kung-fu princess. He charged towards and lunged at her like a pouncing tiger but Matilda leaped into the air and gave him and uppercut to the jaw. Matilda and Mushu landed back on the arena and Matilda pushed Mushu away. Bladefeather threw a dagger at her but Matilda deflected it with her black armbands. Bladefeather tried to kick Matilda but Matilda grabbed his talons and threw them down on the floor. Bladefeather swiped at Matilda with his wing but Matilda ducked and retaliated with a punch to the gut. She then grabbed Bladefeather's head and pulled him down on the ground. Mushu tried to pounce on Matilda from behind but the mongoose let him have it in the snout without even turning around. She then turned around and swung her leg at Mushu but she missed and Mushu grabbed her leg. He tripped Matilda up but the mongoose wasn't down for long. She yanked her leg out of Mushu's grip and kicked him in the gut. She leaped back to her feet and roundhouse punched him in the jaw. That blow seemed to have heavily stunned Mushu and the iguana was left wondering what just happened. Bladefeather suddenly appeared from behind and he grabbed Matilda in a chokehold. Matilda wrestled herself out of his grasp and grabbed his arm. She tossed him into Mushu and the two kung-fu masters rolled over each other in a heap. They both got back to their feet and they tried to attack Matilda together. Matilda punched Bladefeather and kicked backwards, hitting Mushu in the thigh. She then gave Mushu a sideways chop to the jaw and she gave Bladefeather an uppercut to the beak. Matilda then leaped up and did a split kick on them, hitting them and sending them sprawling. Bladefeather and Mushu lay on the arena floor, flabbergasted by Matilda's incredible power. Master Gāng had watched the whole fight and Matilda's strength surprised even him. He never expected the kind and gentle princess to be THAT powerful! The princess just casually stroked her hair and wondered over to Bladefeather. She held her hand out to help him

back up. Bladefeather took it and Matilda pulled the falcon back onto his feet.

"Good match you two." said Matilda.

Mushu just beamed with pride. He felt honoured when his opponent said "Good match".

"Good? This was incredibly meritorious." said Bladefeather "I had a feeling you were stronger then us when we watched you take down that Shadow the Hedgehog canaille* and this match has just proved my theory correct."

"Well I've had very strict and vigorous training from my secret master." said Matilda "He wishes to train me until I'm as strong as Zira the Ruthless."

"No wonder your strength exceeds ours then my blossom flower." said Bladefeather "Your master is training you beyond the master stage. Our master only trained us to the master stage. You master is really trying to aggrandize you and make you more powerful then even that unrighteous monster Zira."

"That's right." said Matilda "He wants me to reach the expert level. I unfortunately wasn't having those kind of lessons when Zira returned to Chun-Nan so I stayed out of any fights with her, knowing I couldn't beat her if you two together and Master Shan couldn't beat her."

"She only beat Master Shan because she had me, Mushu and those disgusting shadow cats helping her." corrected Bladefeather "On her own, she still couldn't beat Master Shan. She needed assistance to do so hence the reason she subjugated me and Mushu in the first place."

"I see." said Matilda "Well if Zira ever returns, I'll be able to defeat her as I'm on my way to becoming an expert, not that I'm proud of it though."

"It's a good thing you aren't child." said Master Gāng "It's like my master once taught me. "He who takes great pride in thy power,

shalt end up consumed by thy power"."

"I'm not even proud to be a kung-fu warrior." said Matilda "I'd much rather not be learning it at all. But my father's safety comes first so I learned the lessons and overcame the obstacles and all in secret so no one would suspect anything."

"And I'm really proud of you for that Matilda." said Tai, hugging his daughter happily "You bring me great honour displaying your honesty and bravery to anyone we meet. I couldn't ask for a better daughter."

"And I couldn't ask for a better father." said Matilda, hugging him back "If only mother could see us now. So happy and well looked after."

"Yes, I would love to have seen your mother's face when she found out her own daughter is the one to defend the family." said Tai sadly as old memories came to his head "But a gang of ninjas has made that impossible now."

"No entirely emperor." said Master Gāng "I'm sure Empress Tiana is looking down at you from the heavens with a very happy face on Emperor Tai. Just because she's not here physically does not mean she is not there at all. She lives, she lives in your daughter, Matilda."

"She lives in me?" said Matilda with a baffled expression on her face.

"Yes child, you have your mother's beauty, your mother's eyes and your mother's spirit." said Master Gāng "I couldn't possibly think of anyone alive today who has a more striking resemblance to your mother Matilda."

"I've often thought that about my little rosebud." said Tai, stroking Matilda's back "She's a lot like my late wife both in looks and personality. That's why she's such a treasure to me."

"Oh daddy, I love you so much." said Matilda, kissing her father on the cheek.

"I love you too Matilda." said Tai as he and his daughter warmly

embraced each other.

This loving tender moment was interrupted by the arrival of somebody. Bladefeather and Mushu saw the visitor and they bowed down before him. Tai and Matilda broke up the hug and they stared at the visitor. The visitor was a mongoose and he wore a very wealthy robe with decorated patterns around the sleeves and he wore a long flowing sash that trialled behind him as he walked. He wore a very impressive headwear with the Yin-Yang symbols on them and a red gem at the top. The headwear was golden and red in colour and the mongoose looked to be in his fifties, about ten years older then Tai himself. Tai and Matilda both knew the visitor and so did Master Gāng, Bladefeather and Mushu, hence the reason they were bowing to him.

"Governor Hunan Shen." said Tai in surprise.

"Good afternoon gentlemen." said Shen in his big, deep, booming voice that echoed around the arena "I'm terribly sorry to burst in like this, am I interrupting anything?"

"No Governor." said Master Gāng "My students were just having a training match with each other and Princess Matilda."

"Ah that's good." said Shen with a hearty grin on his face "Nice to see the spirit of kung-fu still lives on. I never expected the daughter of our emperor to be a kung-fu warrior though."

"Governor Shen, it's an honour to meet you sir." said Matilda, bowing politely to the mongoose in the large headwear.

"It's an honour meeting such a pretty face again young one." said Shen happily "Tai has raised you up well hasn't he child?"

"Yes sir." said Matilda "Daddy has raised me up perfectly. Thank you for your compliments."

Tai smiled happily at his daughter. She was perfect when it came to manners. After all, he had taught her the importance of good manners.

"So former emperor of Chun-Nan, why are we blessed with your

presence?" asked Bladefeather.

"I'm here to discuss the Five Festivals of Holy Honour." said Shen with a grave look on his aged face "I trust the news of yesterday's festival, The Festival of the Rising Sun ending in disaster is not unheard to you?"

"No Governor." said Tai grimly "I was there when it happened, I run the festivals remember? The emperor always runs the festivals."

"Of course my magnanimous emperor." said Shen brightly "Well, the reason behind the Festival of the Rising Sun's sudden blackout is still unknown to us governors but we're determined to find out why the festival went wrong. If the next four festivals go wrong then we must assume the worst."

"Who or what do you think could be doing this?" asked Matilda "I mean, the Festival of the Rising Sun can't just go wrong, something must have happened."

"I have a sneaky suspicion that terrorism is the culprit my dear." said Shen "After all, the Five Festivals of Holy Honour NEVER go wrong. NEVER. It must be terrorism. That's it! There must be someone sabotaging the festivals!"

"Well if this keeps up then I'll be convinced Governor." said Tai "I am Chun-Nan's emperor and I will make sure that the festivals go without delay or error."

"I'm sure I can trust you on that Tai." said Shen happily "After all, I taught you everything you needed to know about ruling a country and now I've stepped down, it's up to you to keep Chun-Nan safe and happy."

"I have been doing so for twenty years old friend." said Tai "And I shall continue to until my reign is up."

"Excellent!" boomed Shen proudly "Well now I've said my word, I'll be off now. Chun-Nan's government won't run without me."

"Bye Shen." said Matilda with a polite wave "It was good to see you again."

"It was good to see you too dear child." said Shen, turning around and walking away "Goodbye everyone. I'll see you tomorrow morning."

Everybody waved the governor goodbye as he walked away from the stadium. The moment Shen left, Matilda turn to Tai and she wrapped her arms around his arm.

"Daddy? Do you think tonight's festival, the Festival of the Running Water will end in disaster just like last night's festival did?" she asked worriedly.

"Not while I'm on it." said Tai "There's nothing to fret Matilda, the Festival of the Running Water will not suffer the same fate the Festival of the Rising Sun did."

Matilda nodded, hoping that her father would be right. If not then what would become of the next three festivals…?

Meanwhile, the nefarious Yīnyǐng Mao were preparing for their next scheme. As the clock ticked towards tonight, the time the Festival of the Running Water began, the shadowy ninja cats were making last minute preparations for their plan. They had shipped all the crates that Sora had seen them with last night off to their master and the crates had arrived at his temple. The temple was very scary and intimidating looking, even for a temple with it's sharp looking roof tiles, demonic looking roof shape and dragon heads sculpted on the doors and above the windows. Fong Zarr and some cats carried a crate into the temple. This crate was marked with the words "EXTREMELY DANGEROUS: HANDLE WITH CARE" and Fong Zarr and his men put the crate down on the floor. They opened the crate and looked inside it. The crate was full of gas hoses and a gas boiler. There was also a flamethrower in the crate too. Fong Zarr chuckled evilly at the crate's lethal looking cargo.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he cackled "Just you wait shadow cats, tonight, the Festival of the Rrrrunning Water will end up becoming the Festival of the Spouting Fire Showers!"

"And it's all because of this boiler and these gas pipes." said one of the cats.

"I never knew wrrrecking a festival could be so much fun." purred Fong Zarr evilly "Maybe we should give up being thieves and be terrorists instead. We'll get a lot more rrrespect that way!"

Then suddenly, something appeared into the room and stood before the Yīnyǐng Mao clan. Fong Zarr bowed down respectfully. The figure just stared ominously at the shadow cats and the crates. The figure was suited from head to toe. It had a helmet with a uniquely shaped black visor, two spikes and some detailed patterns on the sides. It wore shoulder pads with sharp edges, thick arm pieces on the lower arms and a belt with the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's symbol on it. The torso area was full of details and decals and there was a red circle under the abs section. It wore thick heavy boots with a crescent moon logo at the toe section. The boots were navy blue in colour and the figure's formidable suit was blue and gold in colour. It also wore a shoulder cape on its left shoulder which was blade with a red symbol on it. It had two poles on its back with a strong, flexible material in between that stretched out when the poles were deployed and it made a pair of wings for him to glide through the air with. The figure looked very formidable and very, very intimidating to anyone he came across.

"Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr "The equipment is ready. The sabotaging of the Festival of Rrrrunning Water is ready to commence tonight."

"Excellent work you Yīnyǐng Mao beauties." said Lord Vharr darkly, his voice was very growly and robotical sounding due to his helmet having a voice modifier "Operation: Festival Folly is formulated and well underway thanks to you brilliant ninjas. The Five Festivals of Holy Honour will be the Five Festivals of Unholy Terror and I will seize the throne from that poor excuse for an emperor at the end of the week!"

"Indeed you well Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr loyally "You will get the thrrrone you so deserve. You'd better keep your end of the bargain or the Yīnyǐng Mao clan will not be so lenient on you."

"Don't bore me with petty threats Fong Zarr." snapped Lord Vharr "You'll get what's coming to you and what's coming to you is what you'll get. All the riches and power you shadowy assassins have dreamed of."

"Yes Lord Vharr, thank you Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr "When shall we set up?"

"We set the plan in motion when the sun sets and the night rises." explained Lord Vharr "We wait until twenty minutes before the festival starts and we set up our deadly attack."

Fong Zarr just smiled maliciously at his master.

"The Festival of the Rrrrunning Water will end up in flames." he said darkly.

"Indeed it shall Fong Zarr." said Lord Vharr happily "And then tomorrow's festival will end in disaster, and then the next and then the last one and then I shall be the new emperor of Chun-Nan!"

The whole Yīnyǐng Mao clan and Lord Vharr erupted into a loud chorus of evil laughter. Chun-Nan was doomed for yet another doomed festival tonight…

At the Pagoda of Prosperity, Matilda was sitting in the back garden and meditating. She was sitting by the pretty little pond they had decorated with rose bushes and pansies and she was breathing in slowly and deeply as she tried to relax her nerves before the big event tonight. She stuck her elbows out and her fingertips lightly touched each other as she began to relax.

"Inner peace…" she said quietly to herself.

Inner peace was one of her final lessons she had to learn before her path to the expert level of kung-fu was complete. Inner peace could be hard to learn, especially at a young age but Matilda was determined to learn the lesson. The gentle trickling of the pond and the silent evening air was making Matilda feel very relaxed and at peace at the moment. But try as she might, she couldn't stop letting

the dark visions she had of the Five Festivals of Chun-Nan all being ruined plague her thoughts. If Matilda couldn't keep her worries at bay then she'd never learn inner peace. Matilda breathed in deeply and tried once again to relax but her head was just filled with worry. She eventually gave up and threw her arms down by her side.

"Why can't I keep my worries at bay?" she moaned to herself "Bladefeather and Mushu don't seem to have that problem when they meditate. Maybe I'm just more overly jumpy then they are."

"That maybe the case my dear princess." came a familiar voice from behind.

Matilda jumped and looked around only to see it was Bladefeather the Falcon standing there with what appeared to be a large flower in his hand.

"Bladefeather, I wish you'd warn me before creeping up on me like that!" snapped Matilda.

"My utmost apologies princess of fair and peaceful nature." said Bladefeather bowing politely "I thought you would have heard me coming. A kung-fu master can hear even the smallest of sounds you know."

"I'm not a kung-fu master yet." corrected Matilda "I'm being trained beyond the master stage. Anyway, why are you here and where's Mushu?"

"Mushu's assisting Governor Shen and Emperor Tai in setting up the finishing touches to the Festival of the Running Water." explained Bladefeather "I however, decided to come and see if your goodwill is still good right now. And deliver a gift to you."

He then preceded to hand Matilda the flower he had with him. Matilda was amazed by the flower Bladefeather had suddenly given him and she took it. She was amazed by the flower's beauty and its wonderful smell.

"Oh Bladefeather, thank you." she said, awestruck by the falcon's generosity "I love flowers!"

"You love the flowers hasn't gone unnoticed to me Matilda." said Bladefeather, sitting down beside Matilda in a meditating position "So I decided to take the liberty of presenting one to you. I'm sure you can find a good place to keep it princess. However, the gift is more then just out of sheer generosity."

"It is?" asked Matilda, gently settling the flower down beside her "What is it about then?"

"Matilda, my respect for you and your emperor may not be unknown to you but with you, I more then respect you." said Bladefeather "Over the years, I have had a secret fondness for you. I've always fancied your beauty and your peaceful ways and…you um…always the apple of my beady little eyes."

"You have a secret fondness for me?" said Matilda as if Bladefeather was looking at her weird and speaking a foreign language both at once "How long have you been fond of me?"

"Since you became sixteen." replied Bladefeather "You are twenty-one now which means I've been harbouring a fondness for you for four years, going on five now."

"That explains all the visits you pay and the gifts you've given me on my birthdays." said Matilda as she thought back on the subject "I always wondered why you were so generous to me all the time. I always wondered if it was something I did."

"It's nothing you've done Matilda, it's my unwavering love for you." said Bladefeather, not noticing he just said the word "love" out loud to Matilda.

"Unwavering love? You love me don't you?" asked Matilda.

The falcon's eyes widened and his face went bright pink.

"Did I really just say that to you?" he muttered to himself. He then spoke to Matilda "If it doesn't offend you or shock you in anyway Matilda, I do…um…love you." said Bladefeather, trying not to blush again "I…always…have since I…first met…you…"

Matilda couldn't believe what she was hearing. All this time, she had

been the apple of Bladefeather's eye? The kung-fu falcon was in love with her? This was amazing news to Matilda, Bladefeather always came across as a vain and serious kung-fu master who also had a huge heart at the same time. Never in a million years would she have guessed that Bladefeather fancied her!

"Bladefeather…I…I'm speechless to say the least." said Matilda slowly "But also…flattered. I never would have guessed you loved me."

"I never had the valour to tell you Matilda." said Bladefeather "But something told me to finally let it out to you. I do hope you're not repulsed by this."

"No, not at all!" cried Matilda "I'm thrilled you feel this way about me. I in all honesty have had a secret fondness for you too. I just didn't know if I should reveal it to you or not."

"So you love me as well my elegant princess?" said Bladefeather in surprise.

"Y-yes." said Matilda, going red in the cheeks "Your kindness and generosity to me as well as your duty to the country won my heart a while ago. It's my love for you that prevented me from attacking you the time Zira subjugated you. I was just too afraid to tell you what I felt in fear of horrifying you."

"Hmm. We both had trouble revealing our feelings for each other." said Bladefeather "It's amazing how after all this time, we've finally spilt the rice on each other."

"I'm amazed by that too." said Matilda "And I'm glad we've finally been able to share our secrets. I feel much better now."

She then leaned forward and gave Bladefeather a quick peck on the cheek. The falcon's head feathers stood up straight and his beak dropped open. He looked like he was about to go crazy with excitement. Matilda giggled at him.

"You're so funny when you're embarrassed!" she laughed "I thought a kung-fu master doesn't get embarrassed at anything!"

Bladefeather just ignored the mongoose and remained in his love struck trance. His trance was broken though by the sound of Emperor Tai's voice.

"Matilda dearest, it's time for the festival to start." he said "You come along too Bladefeather."

Bladefeather immediately got up to his feet and bowed respectfully to the emperor.

"Yes emperor." he said, quickly walking away.

Matilda got up to her feet and the two mongooses headed off to the Festival of the Running Water.

"What was Bladefeather doing with you Matilda?" asked Tai.

"Oh just saying hi to me and seeing how I was." lied Matilda. She wasn't ready to reveal her love for Bladefeather to her dad yet. She wanted to wait until the festival was over.

"Oh that's nice." said Tai "That falcon never fails to respect his superiors does he?"

Matilda nodded. She smiled happily to herself as she and her father headed off to the local village for the beginning of the festival. Bladefeather loved her just like she loved him! What a great revelation that was! She just hoped that Tai wouldn't be so shocked by their secret love…

The Festival of the Running Water was ready to begin. The buffet had been set up, the water shows had been prepared and were ready to go and the balloons and paper lanterns were ready to float away. After Tai and Matilda had arrived at the festival, Tai had released the balloons and lanterns and the party began. Music began to play and people began to dance and sing merrily and parade through the streets of the village. In a few minutes, the water show would begin and the festival would be underway. Governor Shen watched the opening moments of the festival and to his relief; everything seemed to be going according to plan.

"I guess I was wrong when I thought terrorism was to blame for yesterday's festival being ruined." he said to himself "Everything's going swimmingly so far. Maybe we just had a technical problem in the light parade last night."

Tai and Matilda watched as the music began to play and the happy citizens began to dance through the village. Their faces brightened.

"This is why I love these festivals." said Tai happily "They bring so much joy to my people every time I host them."

"I agree daddy." said Matilda "The Five Festivals of Holy Honour are always a joy to the people of Chun-Nan aren't they?"

"Yes." said Tai "Provided this festival doesn't go wrong like last night's did."

"Everything seems OK so far." said Matilda, surveying the happy scene before her "I don't think there's anything to worry about daddy. Everything's fine."

"Yes Matilda, everything's fine." said Tai, even though secretly he wasn't thinking so.

Unbeknownst to anybody, there was one partier in the crowd of happy citizens that wasn't even partying. There was a green fox in a coolie hat that was trying to escape the crowd and get to the sidelines. The fox managed to get out of the crowd and hide behind a building. The fox then removed the coolie-hat and its green fur changed back to blue. The fox was really was Sora in a disguise. One of the gadgets on her utility belt had the ability to change her appearance and make her look different or change her fur colour. The superspy was still curious over her finds at the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple so she had come to the festival to see what was going to happen. Sadly, her spy skills hadn't tracked anything suspicious or out of the norm. Everything seemed perfectly fine. She'd even checked the paper lanterns and none of them appeared to be carrying a bomb or anything. She remained behind the building and thought to herself.

"What are the Yīnyǐng Mao clan up to?" she wondered "If they

wanted their scheme to be ready in time for the Festival of the Running Water then why haven't they struck yet? Are they biding their time or something?"

She then heard some footsteps behind her. Sora decided not to immediately assume it was someone unfriendly and she turned around to see who it was. To her surprise, it was a squirrel in a fancy top hat and tweed jacket complete with red bow tie. He had gold leaf coloured fur and his left eye was replaced with a metal one, suggesting he had lost the eye in some sort of event or battle some time ago. He looked old but not too old to be on the field.

"Hello there Sora Sumdac of the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit." purred the squirrel.

"Hello Joel Nutmeg of the Secret Intelligence and Information Department." said Sora, clearly familiar with the squirrel "What brings you here?"

"Well not to sound disrespectful of the M.S.I.U. or anything but the S.I.I.D. were concerned about how long you had been investigating the odd-goings on in Chun-Nan so they sent me for extra-assistance." explained Joel "They thought you were dead after hearing your car was destroyed."

"They did?" exclaimed Sora. She then slapped herself on the head and muttered "Oh damn it! I'm always forgetting to call the M.S.I.U. and telling them I'm not dead! I really need to get better at making sure my own organization doesn't think I'm dead!"

"Oh well, you're alive. That's good enough for our organizations." said Joel "Anyways, did you find anything suspicious when you spied on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan last night?"

"Well I found a lot of boxes containing several items of interest." said Sora, taking the orb cam off her utility belt and pressing a button on it that made the orb cam project the images on it like a film projector "These crates in the photo are full of traditional ninja weapons of course and these crates here," she scrolled onto the next picture "Are full of paper lanterns with bombs on them."

"Paper lanterns with bombs in them?" said Joel with a puzzled look on his face "Why ever would those ninja cats want something like that?"

"To help sabotage the festivals I guess." said Sora "Although oddly enough, I haven't found any here tonight. Maybe they're saving them for tomorrow night's festival, the Festival of the Breezing Wind."

"Ah, the festival with the lantern races." thought Joel "Your theory could be correct dear Sora. Did you find anything else out?"

"Not really other then the fact the Yīnyǐng Mao clan has an anonymous master." said Sora "I though their leader was Fong Zarr here…" she showed Joel a picture of Fong Zarr she had taken of him last night "…but he mentioned something about a master. Maybe there's someone else behind this dastardly plot of theirs."

"You could be too right Sora." said Joel grimly "In my thirty years of spy work, I learnt that the enemy always has a mastermind behind the whole thing."

"And I am determined to find out who the mastermind behind this plot is." said Sora determinedly "Joel, you can help me if you wish."

"Thank you Sora Sumdac." said Joel happily "Thanks for letting me have the honour of working with such a highly recommended agent."

"Stop flattering me Joel." said Sora teasingly "Now lay low, we're still on a mission here."

"Yes Ma'am." said Joel.

"Don't call me Ma'am!" snapped Sora.

Joel said nothing more and he lay down low alongside Sora. They peeked their heads around the corner of the building and kept their eyes open for anything suspicious.

Sora and Joel weren't the only ones spying on the festival to see what was going on. Fong Zarr was here and he was sitting on top of a tall building that loomed over the village below. Fong Zarr was sitting there and waiting to make his move. As he waited, he

watched the happy people celebrating, feasting and parading down on the streets below him. It gave him great pleasure to see all of this happening, knowing it was not going to end well and it would be because of him. Then suddenly, the earpiece which he was wearing started bleeping. Fong Zarr pressed a button on the earpiece and he held it in.

"Yes Lord Vharr?" he asked.

"It is time Fong Zarr." Lord Vharr's voice purred in Zarr's ear "Turn the gas on."

"Yes Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr darkly.

He pulled a remote device out of his vest coat and he pressed the button on the remote. The gas boiler, which was stationed near the water hoses used for the water show switched on so once the "water hoses" were turned on, gas would spout out instead. Shortly before the festival had started, Fong Zarr and his shadow cats had rigged the water shows with gas pipes and a gas boiler so the hoses would spout gas instead of water. But that wasn't the worst part of it, the worst part of it was about to come…

After the parade and dance had stopped and the music had died down, Emperor Tai happily announced to the party-goers.

"Ladies and gentlemen." he announced to the crowd "As you all know, this is a holy festival to celebrate the wonderful water of which we live on. We drink the water to live and we use the water for many of life's purposes. And now, we honour the water by watching this water show which we have put together. Let the water show begin!"

He stood to the side and waited for the vat of water, which had the water hoses to start squirting. But nothing happened for the water hoses had been replaced with gas. Everybody stood and waited for something to happen. Nothing did. Tai pulled a face.

"What is going on?" he wondered "Why aren't the water jets doing anything?"

"Have we got a technical problem somewhere?" suggested Matilda.

"I don't know." said Tai "I'd best see what is the…"

Before Tai could do anything, the jet thrusters began to spout fire and the gas which was already spouting out was alit with the flames. The gas hoses had flame throwers attached above them and Fong Zarr had just activated them. Fire and gas is a deadly combo as when put together, it explodes and the jet thrusters, which were spouting a deadly combo of fire and gas at once so they all erupted into flames. The explosion tore the vat apart and water spilled everywhere. The citizens all screamed in terror and ran for their lives as the water vat suddenly became an exploding bonfire. The gas was still going so the fire just made more and more loud bangs. The loud bangs caused some of the fire to fly everywhere and set fire to the buildings. Tai and Matilda ran for their lives and so did everybody else. Sora and Joel watched in horror as the entire festival went up in flames. Fong Zarr however, was clearly enjoying this but he turned the gas off as he wasn't trying to destroy the village. The fire stopped exploding but it carried on burning and Bladefeather and Mushu stepped into try and put the fire out. Tai and Matilda stared in indescribable horror as the festival burnt to the ground in front of them. Shen stormed up to Tai angrily. He clearly didn't look pleased with what was going on now.

"What happened Tai?" snarled Shen "I thought you had everything perfectly set up? How did this happen?"

He pointed to the horrific scene that raged on and on. Tai just looked down at the ground sadly.

"I have no idea Governor." said Tai "I double-checked everything to…"

"Well you obviously didn't do a good job because what should have been a festival celebrating the water has ended up turning into a fireworks display!" bellowed Shen "You have messed up horribly tonight Dalon Tai! You had better redeem yourself tomorrow or you will be in huge trouble emperor!"

And with that, the mongoose in the huge headwear stormed off angrily. Matilda just looked at her dad sadly, putting a hand on his shoulder.

"I believe you set up the festival perfectly." said Matilda softly "I think someone has sabotaged the whole thing."

"Maybe you're right treasure." said Tai quietly "But we don't have any evidence to prove your theory. We should just go home and leave before we get into any more bother."

The two royal mongooses slunk away from the village, leaving Bladefeather and Mushu to put the fire out. As for Sora and Joel, they began discussing the whole disastrous event that had gone off just before their eyes.

"What the heck happened out there Sora?" blurted Joel.

"I bet the Yīnyǐng Mao clan did this." deduced Sora "I could smell gas and the water show never has gas pipes or flamethrowers. The emperor could not have deliberately set up the festival like that. He's not a bad person. Someone rigged the water show with gas pipes and flamethrowers. And I bet the Yīnyǐng Mao clan did it."

"Well since they sabotaged the first festival it was likely they were going to sabotage this one." said Joel "We've got to stop them before they strike again."

"I know Joel." said Sora "The Yīnyǐng Mao clan is likely to make their next move tomorrow. At the Festival of the Breezing Wind…"

Footnotes:

***See the legendary Chun-Nan arc Stories 52-56 from *STH: Heroes of Mobius* !**

***Indeed she did in an unbelievable turn of events in *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 63!**

This isn't good! Chun-Nan's festivals are being sabotaged by the mysterious Lord Vharr and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan! Can Sora and Joel find out who's behind all this before disaster strikes

again? And can Matilda help in anyway? Join me next time as this thrilling saga continues in Part 2...reviews are welcome.

P.S. What do you think of Matilda and Bladefeather as a couple? Pretty odd isn't it?

The Five Festivals of ChunNan 2

Part 2

"Can you believe how well that worked Fong Zarr?" cried one of the ninja cats "Those gas pipes combined with those flame throwers turned the Festival of the Running Water into a fireworks display!"

"I can't believe how well that worked either." said Fong Zarr, leader of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan "At the rate we're going, the next three festivals will end up in disaster and it's all because of us! At the end of the week, that poor excuse for an emperor Dalon Tai will be gone and Lord Vharr, the true emperor of Chun-Nan will rise and we, the mighty Yīnyǐng Mao clan will be the supreme ninjas of Chun-Nan!"

The shadow cat leader bellowed into laughter and his laughter echoed around the room. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan were clearly pleased by their recent success last night in how they had just turned the Festival of the Running Water into a bonfire display. Not only did the festival end in disaster, but the village had been heavily damaged by their sabotaging method so the next festival would clearly have to take place in another village. But that wouldn't change anything, Fong Zarr and his cronies would still make a mess out of the next festival. Fong Zarr's laughter was interrupted by the arrival of someone he had been waiting to see. Lord Vharr, the formidable figure in the formidable bodysuit had arrived into the room and was greeted with a bow from the ninjas and total silence.

"What's with the cheerful activity Fong Zarr?" boomed Vharr in his deep, growling, robotical sounding voice.

"We're just celebrating our…I-I mean your success last night Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr, bowing respectfully to his master "Operation: Festival Folly is working as planned."

"I know." said Lord Vharr "The Festival of the Running Water didn't end particularly well according to what you've told me. I surveyed the aftermath and the village looks a terrible state doesn't it?"

"And it's all because of the gas and fire combo." said Fong Zarr "So is the move against the Festival of the Breezing Winds ready?"

"Formulated and awaiting execution." replied Lord Vharr "I personally, will watch the festival's ruination myself."

Fong Zarr smiled wickedly.

"Just wait until that stupid princess does her wind dance!" cackled Fong Zarr evilly "She'll get a shock won't she?"

"More then just the princess will get a shock tonight." corrected Lord Vharr "Everybody will get a shock. Even Dalon Tai…"

And with that, he left the room, cackling like a demonic dictator. Fong Zarr just cackled to himself. This was one festival he was looking forward to ruining when tonight came…

Out of all the festivals in the Five Festivals of Holy Honour, the Festival of the Breezing Winds was Princess Matilda's least favourite festival. In the festival she had to do a wind dance, a dance with long waving ribbons and a fan blowing to stimulate the wind and the grace it brings but that wasn't the reason she hated it. She hated the way she had to dress for the dance. Whenever somebody did a wind dance in the Festival of the Breezing Winds, they had to dress in nothing more then a bra and a long flowing dress with splits in it for the legs to show. Matilda hated dressing like this. When Matilda did the dance, she had her hair differently styled too. Instead of a bun, her hair was let loose and was now long and flowing to give more of a wind effect. She didn't like it when her hair was like that either; she preferred it in a bun. Still, it was tradition for a princess of Chun-Nan to dress like this for the wind dance so she had to put up with it. Night had fallen once again and the third festival in the Five Festivals saga was ready to begin. There were giant fans set up for the wind races, paper lanterns were ready to fly off and race and the stage had been set up for the wind dance. The festival had been relocated into another village as the local village was being repaired from the disaster last night. Sadly, due to the disasters of the first two festivals, not as many people had come to the festival this time.

Some citizens still had faith in Tai whereas the others were too afraid to come in fear of this festival ending badly. Governor Shen hadn't shown up either. He had stated to Tai that he was too angry at the failure of last night to come so he had opted out of this one and the next two festivals. Tai felt dishonoured at that but he knew that the show must go on. He and Matilda stood around waiting for the festival to start.

"Well Matilda, it looks like our festival celebrators have diminished to half the amount we usually have." said Tai sadly.

"I'm not too surprised really." muttered Matilda, still fuming over her costume "The first two festivals didn't end well so they're probably having low hopes for this one. I hope my wind dance can save the festivals from losing an audience altogether."

"When you get on stage Matilda, you will blow the audience away." said Tai "Your wind dancing always pays off every year so it'll pay off now."

"Yeah." said Matilda grimly "Makes wearing this stupid costume almost worth it."

Tai just sighed in annoyance. He really wished his daughter didn't always have a problem with the wind-dancer's costume she had to wear. As for the guests at the festival, two last guests arrived. They were, of course, Bladefeather the Falcon and Mushu the Iguana, kung-fu masters and defenders of the country.

"Nǐ hǎo emperor." said Bladefeather, bowing before Tai respectfully.

Mushu just bowed for he was unable to talk to Tai.

"Nǐ hǎo to you too Bladefeather and Mushu." said Tai brightly "I'm glad you still have faith in this holy celebration."

"I have faith in anything supervised by you my magnanimous emperor." said Bladefeather "And since this is the festival your daughter gives us a beatific performance."

He said this just as he was looking at Matilda. Needless to say, the moment he caught sight of her, his eyes nearly popped out of their

sockets. He was used to seeing Matilda in that gorgeous purple dress she usually wore but never had he seen her in an outfit like that. He tried his best not to stare awkwardly at her but yet he couldn't help but keep his eyes glued to Matilda's now bare belly. It looked cute to him.

"Princess. You look truly beatific!" blurted Bladefeather without even realizing it "No wonder you usually give a beatific performance in the wind-dances!"

Mushu tried not to laugh weakly behind Bladefeather's back. He failed. Due to his damaged voice-box, it came out more like a wheezing laugh then a normal laugh and that made Bladefeather glare icily at the iguana.

"Thanks Bladefeather, you're too kind." muttered Matilda with her hands on her hips "I hate dressing like this. I feel like I'm hardly wearing anything."

"Matilda, please stop griping about it." moaned Tai "Do remember, you only have to dress like that for tonight and then you dress how you like for the rest of the year."

"Yes daddy." said Matilda, scowling slightly.

Meanwhile, Sora Sumdac and Joel Nutmeg, super spies from two different spy companies that worked together, had returned to the party. They wished to visit the festival and see if they could find anything suspicious and hopefully, catch the ones behind all this. Joel surveyed the paper lanterns that were on display and using his robot eye, which was really an orb-cam he placed in his empty eye-socket to act as an eye, he managed to find out the paper lanterns weren't harmless. They were full of bombs. Sora recognized the lanterns. They were the bomb lanterns she'd found when she spied on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan the night before. Now they had found the lanterns, they confiscated the bombs while no one was looking and disposed of the bombs safely. Now the Festival of the Breezing Winds would not be ruined. While no one was looking, Sora and Joel returned the paper lanterns to their original places, now without the bombs.

"Well Sora, this was easy enough." said Joel "We've managed to convert the paper lanterns from a hazard back into a harmless little paper model now."

"I know." said Sora, looking at the bombs that she and Joel had stolen from the lanterns "But I have this nagging feeling in my gut that the festival still isn't safe. Why do I keep feeling the Yīnyǐng Mao clan has a back-up plan?"

"Most of the time, the enemy does have a back-up plan my dear." said Joel grimly "I found that out the hard way." he added, remembering a dark moment in his career that he wished to forget.

"Well if the enemy does have a back-up plan, we can counter-attack." noted Sora, showing Joel the bombs they had stolen "We've got their bombs."

"I know." said Joel with a brisk smile on his face "The Yīnyǐng Mao clan won't know what hit it."

Trouble was, the spies had no idea that the mastermind behind the Festival of Folly was eavesdropping on them. Lord Vharr had arrived and was taking shelter behind the roof of a noodle shop. He had seen the spies stealing the bombs from the paper lanterns but he wasn't angry. He was slightly miffed that the spies were wising up to his plan but he had a Plan B. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan hadn't set up ALL the lantern bombs they had. They had hundreds spare so Sora and Joel could steal as many bombs as they liked, they always had spares. Lord Vharr spoke into a microphone that was stationed in his helmet.

"Fong Zarr, bring in the spares." he whispered "Some spies have relinquished our first supply. And after you do that, eviscerate those spies and stop them from trying to get in the way."

"Yes sir." came Fong Zarr's evil voice from the other side of the microphone.

Lord Vharr cackled quietly to himself. His plan was still in motion and the spies would be dead in no time, eliminating any potential threats for Operation: Festival Folly.

As for the Festival of the Breezing Winds, the festival had started. Some gentle wind-related music began to play and drummers marched down the streets, pounding the drums softly in time with the soothing music that gently sung into the celebrator's ears. The music made them feel calm and relaxed and was calming down whatever anxieties they had prior to celebrating. Even those that had decided to stay indoors could hear the music and they sat by their windows and listened to it. Bladefeather and Mushu stood where they were and closed their eyes, taking in the gentle tunes that rung in their ears.

"Wind related music is always a profession of mine Mushu." said Bladefeather softly "It's melodious and nerve-settling melodies never fail to please my hearing organs."

Mushu nodded in agreement. He liked the music too. Even Tai and Matilda were enjoying the music. They all swayed this way and that as if they were blades of grasses swaying gently in the wind. Once the opening music finished, Matilda would be up on the stage and ready to do her wind dance. As much as she hated the costume she wore, she loved doing the dance itself. It was a lot of fun for her and she loved the happy faces she brought the moment she began to twirl the ribbons so she was looking forward to it a little. As for the party goers, they began to sway side to side in time to the music as if they were blades of grass in the wind. The music was always a popular part of the festival and the party goers were enjoying it.

While all this was going on, Fong Zarr and two ninja cats had arrived at the festival with the replacement lantern bombs and while no one was looking, they stole the paper lanterns and replaced them with the new supply of lantern bombs. The three cats cackled evilly.

"Just wait until Tai lights the lanterns!" cackled one cat under his breath.

"Instead of a wind race, it'll be a ka-boom shower! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed another cat.

"The new batch has been set up sir." reported Fong Zarr into his ear-piece "Where are the spies?"

"They're behind that art shop just on the other side of the street." came the voice of Lord Vharr "They don't appear to be watching you right now."

"Thank you master." said Fong Zarr "We shall rrrip them to shreds for you."

He and his two cats all sneaked away from the giant fan that was used for the lantern race and they crept over to the building Sora and Joel were hiding behind. Sora and Joel weren't ready for them though, they were listening to the glorious wind music and were so caught up in it, they didn't notice the ninjas were coming towards them. However, Sora opened her eyes for a minute and she saw Fong Zarr and his henchmen coming. She stopped Joel from dancing and the squirrel in the tweed jacket saw the ninjas coming towards them. Fong Zarr leaped in front of them with a vicious snarl and his two henchmen drew out a pair of katanas each. Sora whipped out her spray bottle and pointed it at Fong Zarr. The henchmen couldn't believe their eyes and neither could Fong Zarr. They recognized Sora instantly and the fact she was alive when she was seemingly killed by a firework the other night.

"You!" cried one cat "But we killed you! We blew your car up!"

"Then I must be the world's most alive looking corpse!" sneered Sora, letting Fong Zarr have it in the eyes with the spray again.

Fong Zarr roared in pain and he began to furiously rub his throbbing eyes. Sora head-butted him in the stomach and knocked him over.

"Run Joel! I'll hold them off!" ordered Sora.

Joel did as he was told and he ran for his life. The two ninja cats tried to attack Sora with their katanas but Sora leaped into the air and did a split-kick in-between their heads, hitting them both in the head. The heels of her shoes made the kicks more painful to them. Sora then proceeded to elbow on ninja in the gut, grab him by the ears and then flip him over onto his back. The other cat tried to stab her with the katana but Sora dived in-between his legs and then kicked him in the bottom. But her winning streak was not to last as she was only a twelve year old girl against two ninja cats. The cat

she'd elbowed had recovered from her attack and he grabbed her by the arms. Sora struggled furiously in the cat's killer grasp but she couldn't get free from the cat's tough paws. A Yīnyǐng Mao cat had the toughest paws of any cat in the world. As for Fong Zarr, he had recovered from Sora's spray attack and he was red with rage. His eyes were even redder.

"This time, I'm going to make sure you stay deceased you little pest!" roared Fong Zarr, unsheathing his katanas.

He advanced on the captured Sora and prepared to run her through with her katanas. Sora struggled furiously as Fong Zarr prepared to plunge his katanas into her soft, furry body. It appeared that she would suffer the same fate as her dear agent Ricardo Ringtail. But before Fong Zarr could even so much as prod Sora with the katanas, a laser fired and sliced the katanas in two! It was Joel Nutmeg! The spy's orb-cam eye had the ability to fire lasers that could cut through anything except organic matter and he had used to save Sora from getting stabbed by the katanas. Joel then fired the laser at the cat holding Sora. It couldn't slice anything off of him but it did hurt very badly and the cat let go of Sora to rub himself better. Sora immediately ran for it and she grabbed the pile of bombs they had snatched earlier. Fong Zarr threw his broken katanas at Sora, one of them actually hitting her on the head, but the spy was still up and at them. She gave one bomb to Joel and the squirrel threatened to throw it.

"I wouldn't move a step closer mates." he warned "Otherwise I might have to throw this bomb at you."

"Go ahead!" dared one of the cats "You'll only give us a headache! It won't blow up if you throw it at us dingus!"

"Oh yeah, this thing has a fuse." muttered Joel, noting the fuse sticking out of one end of the bomb.

"If you come a step closer, we'll light the fuse and throw the bomb!" threatened Sora "Now stand down and let us go and things won't have to be needlessly difficult."

Fong Zarr and his cats just stood there, wondering what to do about

the situation.

Meanwhile, the music had stopped playing and Matilda's wind-dance was ready to begin. The mongoose princess stood up on the stage with a pair of sticks with long flowing ribbons attached to them in each hand. Tai beamed proudly as his daughter prepared to begin the dance. The fans attached the stage began to blow to stimulate the wind for the dance, causing Matilda' long black hair to blow about gracefully. The elegant mongoose princess could feel the wind in her fur as the fans softly began to blow. Matilda raised the ribbon sticks and was about to begin the dance until she spotted Lord Vharr sitting on a noodle shop watching the situation between his cronies and the two spies. To her, it looked like there was some unknown mercenary and she immediately assumed it wasn't friendly. Everybody stared at Matilda, waiting for her to begin the dance. Matilda was so focused on Lord Vharr, she didn't even notice the crowd was staring awkwardly at her. Tai began to wonder what was the matter.

"Um…Matilda? The dance?" whispered Tai "We're starting now."

Matilda ignored her father and continued to stare at Lord Vharr. She then decided to investigate about this mysterious figure and see what he was doing here. She dropped the ribbons and ran off the stage and towards the noodle shop Lord Vharr was on. Tai just watched as Matilda ran through the crowd, heading to the noodle shop.

"Matilda! What are you doing? Come back!" yelled Tai.

Matilda still ignored her father and she pushed past Bladefeather and Mushu. The falcon looked at Matilda and watched as she headed to the noodle shop.

"What's diverted the princess's attention then?" wondered Bladefeather.

Matilda stopped at the foot of the noodle shop and in one amazing leap, jumped onto the roof of the noodle shop. When you're a kung-fu master, you can leap to greater heights then the average person. Matilda landed on the roof and startled Lord Vharr. He turned

around to face the princess. Lord Vharr was clearly surprised by this sudden arrival from the princess of Chun-Nan but he didn't show it. He glared at Matilda and Matilda glared back at Lord Vharr.

"Who are you mysterious creature?" asked Matilda "And why are you here?"

Lord Vharr didn't answer her. Instead he promptly leaped off the noodle shop. Matilda tried to catch him before he could get away but she narrowly missed him. Lord Vharr then deployed the poles on his back that stretched out the material he used for gliding and he glided down to the ground. Matilda grumbled to herself.

"Oh that's just cheating!" she muttered, leaping onto another building in an attempt to catch Lord Vharr.

Lord Vharr landed on the ground and lowered his wing attachment. He looked over his shoulder and saw Matilda coming towards him. Instead of running though, he remained where he was and waited for the mongoose to catch him. Matilda landed in front of Lord Vharr and prepared to do battle. Lord Vharr deployed two blades from his wrists and prepared to fight. That sudden move startled Matilda a little as she wasn't expecting him to have blades in his wrists but she shook it off and prepared to fight.

"So, are you going to answer my questions or are you just going to be ignorant mystery warrior?" said Matilda in an unusually cold voice.

Lord Vharr didn't answer Matilda again, instead he charged forward and rammed Matilda with his shoulder. The mongoose hurtled backwards and crashed into the wall of the shop. While Matilda was stunned, Lord Vharr leaped up onto a building and ran for it. Matilda pulled herself free from the wall and she leaped onto a building and chased after Lord Vharr.

Meanwhile, Fong Zarr and his henchmen were still wondering what to do about Sora and Joel as the spies threatened to light a bomb and throw it at them. Fong Zarr heard all the commotion up on the rooftops and he looked up and saw Matilda chasing after Lord Vharr on the rooftops. This very scene gave Fong Zarr a wicked idea.

Maybe he could trick the spies into throwing a bomb at Matilda and end up killing her. Fong Zarr looked back at Sora and Joel.

"If you want to escape with your lives then you will have to get rrrid of me first." he sneered.

Fong Zarr leaped onto a building just as Matilda and Lord Vharr leaped onto it. Joel fired a laser from his orb-cam eye at the bomb's fuse and the laser lit it. He then threw the bomb at Fong Zarr but Fong Zarr dodged the bomb, causing it to hit the building just as Lord Vharr and Matilda moved off of it, and blow a hole in the roof, terrifying the poor resident in the house. Matilda heard the explosion and turned around to see what was happening only to see Fong Zarr standing on a building and laughing at someone on the ground. The mongoose's blood ran cold and her eyes almost popped out of their sockets.

"It's Fong Zarr from the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!" shrieked Matilda "What's that fiend doing here?"

Whatever he was here for, it couldn't be good. She knew of Fong Zarr and his dis-honouree ways from the millions of times he had his shadowy ninjas had pillaged the villages for jewels and money. Matilda decided that Fong Zarr should be disposed of quickly before he could cause any harm to the people. She knew how serious the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was. Matilda stopped chasing after Lord Vharr and ran after Fong Zarr. Fong Zarr saw and smiled wickedly. The princess was going to chase him! Now his plan would work! Fong Zarr leaped away just as Sora threw another bomb at him. The bomb hit the roof and caused an explosion. Matilda stopped dead in her tracks as the bomb exploded and she then proceeded to jump through the explosion and run after Fong Zarr. Joel kept throwing bombs at Fong Zarr as the ninja cat ran for his life across the rooftops but he kept missing and blowing holes in the roofs of the buildings accidentally. Matilda was beginning to wonder who was throwing the bombs and why they were doing so but right now, she had to catch Fong Zarr and stop him from ruining the festival so she continued to chase him. Joel lit a bomb by firing a laser at the fuse and he threw it at Fong Zarr. The cat moved out of the way and the bomb landed just inches beside Matilda. The bomb exploded and Matilda was sent hurling off the building and into the giant fan that

was going to be used for the lantern races. The paper lanterns were sent scattering everywhere and the fan lay on its side as Matilda groaned in pain. Everybody gasped in horror at that scene and they ran over to see if Matilda was OK. Sora saw what happened to Matilda and immediately got angry. She smacked Joel in the cheek as hard as she could. She smacked him so hard, his orb-cam eye popped out of its socket and rolled across the ground.

"You idiot! You just hit the princess!" she snapped angrily "We're trying to hit Fong Zarr, not Matilda!"

"Sorry, I was trying to hit Fong Zarr but he moved before I could hit him and Matilda unfortunately got in the way." said Joel, picking up his orb-cam eye and putting it back into his eye socket.

"I am going to kill you if that bomb just inadvertently ended up killing the poor princess!" shrieked Sora "We're supposed to be spies, not assassins!"

"Sora, I accidentally hit her! I didn't intentionally throw the bomb at the princess!" snapped Joel "Before this gets ugly, we should see if she's alright!"

"She'd better be for your sake!" snarled Sora.

The two spies poked their heads around the corner of the building they had just blown Matilda off and they looked on worriedly to see if she was alright. As for Fong Zarr, he had seen what the spies had done and he began to hope that their blunder had ended up killing Matilda. However, he couldn't wait to find out as he suddenly got a call from Lord Vharr.

"Fong Zarr, the whole mission is compromised." said Lord Vharr "Flee the scene now!"

"Yes Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr.

He leaped off the building and disappeared into the dark of the night along with his two minions. The ninja cats vanished into the darkness, leaving no trace of their presence and leaving Sora and Joel behind to see the damages they had accidentally done while

trying to hit Fong Zarr. But the spies weren't worried about the damaged rooftops, they were worried about Matilda. She appeared to be in great pain as she lay on the broken fan. As for Tai, he had seen the whole scuffle but to him, it looked like Matilda had just gone on a rampage and somehow, caused some rooftops to blow up. He had not seen Lord Vharr or Fong Zarr at all so it looked like the whole thing was Matilda's doing. He was overwhelmed with horror when he saw Matilda flying off the building and into the fan and even though he was mad at her right now, he was also hoping Matilda was OK. Everybody stared at the unconscious Matilda as she lay on the broken fan, wondering if she was alright. The mongoose princess suddenly began to stir. She groaned and moaned drowsily and she sat up on the broken fan. Sora and Joel breathed a heavy sigh of relief when they saw Matilda move. She was alive thank goodness! Tai was relieved that Matilda was alive but he was still angry at what she had seemingly done. Matilda looked up at her father and she could see the fire in his eyes. Her ears drooped back in fear. She knew what was coming.

"Um…daddy? What's the matter?" she asked nervously.

"I think the damage you have inadvertently caused answers that question Matilda!" snapped Tai, notifying the smoking rooftops and the broken fan "You young lady, have just ruined the Festival of the Breezing Winds!"

Matilda stared at her father, completely horrified at what he had just said to him. She surveyed the damages to the rooftops. He really believed she had caused all this? Well she was not backing down so easily! Her father had to know the truth!

"What? No! I didn't do this!" retorted Matilda "I saw something on the rooftop and I tried to catch it! And then I saw Fong Zarr and I tried to catch him but something was throwing bombs at me for some reason!"

"Well from my point of view, I am told a different story!" yelled Tai "From my eyes, I see you frolicking about on the rooftops and then suddenly bombing them! I thought you knew better then to play with bombs and look what happened to you! You almost ended up killing yourself! You have dishonoured me tonight Matilda! Not only have

you dishonoured me but you've dishonoured everybody in the festival! The festival is ruined and it is all your fault!"

"Daddy, please!" begged Matilda.

"I've heard enough!" growled Tai "Go home, I'll deal with you later Matilda! I've got a mess to deal with!"

And with that, Tai turned his back on Matilda and stormed off angrily. The emperor seldom lost his temper but when he did, he was not a force to be reckoned with. Matilda could hardly take in what her father had just said to her. He thought that she had just blatantly decided to ruin the festival by bombing the rooftops? How could he think such a thing? Matilda knew full well she wouldn't dream of doing such an abysmal act! Nevertheless, Tai was not an easy person to reason with when he was in a bad mood so Matilda decided to just pick herself up and slink off home. Her eyes were full of tears. She just let the tears trickle down her face while resisting the urge to cry out loud. Sora and Joel watched the heartbroken princess walk away, guilt sweeping over their bodies like a tidal wave. Sora looked sadly at Joel, the squirrel in the tweed jacket just giving him a sad expression back.

"This…this is all our fault!" wailed Sora "Not only did we almost kill the princess accidentally, we've gotten her into a lot of trouble for something that is our fault, not hers!"

"Boy did we screw up tonight." muttered Joel "This is the worse moment of my entire life. The S.I.I.D will ring my neck for this!" he shrieked, clutching his throat.

"If the M.S.I.U. hears about this muck-up of mine, I'm toast!" shrieked Sora "We've got to redeem ourselves in order to hide this blunder of ours!"

"I know exactly how to do that Sora." said Joel "We go over to the princess, apologize to her and then reveal the truth to her. Then the three of us in turn can reveal the truth to the emperor."

"No, that won't work." muttered Sora "We don't have any proof to give to the emperor to get him to believe Matilda. We're just gonna

have to get some evidence to give to the emperor and prove Matilda's innocence."

Sora and Joel then decided to disappear into the night as there was nothing more for them to do here. They left the disaster site and fled into the darkness of the night, leaving no trace of their presence so no one would suspect they had ever been here. As for Bladefeather and Mushu, they had watched Tai scold Matilda and send her home and they just stood around and watched as Tai cleaned up the mess that Matilda had accidentally caused. Bladefeather felt sorry for his secret love interest and he felt that Matilda had been unfairly scolded, especially since this situation was something the fair and kind-hearted mongoose would never even dream of doing.

"I dunno about you Mushu, but I think the emperor was a little callous and cacophonous towards Matilda don't you?" asked Bladefeather.

Mushu just shrugged. He had no idea what to think of the situation. Bladefeather just scowled as if to say "Well you're no help!" and he began musing to himself.

"I know Matilda as well as her own father does and I know she would never do something as baneful as wrecking a festival." said Bladefeather "I believe what Matilda has said and I think we should go over to the Pagoda of Prosperity and soothe her saddened nerves. Do you want to accompany me Mushu?"

Mushu nodded. He was loyal to Bladefeather after all.

"Very well." said Bladefeather "Let's go and amend our dear princess."

And with that, he and Mushu left the festival behind and wondered off to the Pagoda of Prosperity to cheer Matilda up and hopefully, get her and Tai to kiss and make up for the whole ordeal…

Back at the Pagoda of Prosperity, Matilda had changed out of her wind-dancer's outfit as she couldn't bear to be in the costume for a

minute longer and into her usual purple dress with flower decals and Chinese symbols. She was just styling her hair back into a bun and she gazed miserably at herself in the mirror as she tied a band around her hair to keep it in a bun. She put the hair sticks in to keep her hair in a bun and she stared at herself miserably. Her eyes were still brimming with tears and her furry cheeks were stained by the tears that wouldn't stop falling.

"Dishonoured my dad." she said to herself "And I didn't even do anything wrong. But daddy won't believe me. He thinks I wrecked the Festival of the Breezing Winds when I didn't. I…I was only…"

She began to snivel again. Matilda just slumped on the desk, unable to look at herself in the mirror for any longer and she cried into her arms.

"Oh dad, I didn't mean for the festival to go so wrong!" she wailed to herself "I was only trying to catch Fong Zarr! I'm so sorry I dishonoured everybody at the festival! I'm so sorry I dishonoured you too!"

Since she was the only one in the Pagoda, nobody could say anything to her. She was alone in the Pagoda and could cry only to herself. Her sobs and wails were then suddenly interrupted by a knock on the door. Matilda raised her head up from the desk and wiped her eyes dry.

"Who on Mobius could that be at this time of night?" she wondered to her self with a quick sniffle.

She got up from her make-up desk and wondered over to the door. She slid the door sideways to open it and there on the doorstep were the two spies, Sora Sumdac and Joel Nutmeg. Matilda was amazed at the arrival of two such unusual guests but she tried her best to hide her surprised expression.

"Oh um…hello there you two." said Matilda politely "How may I help you?"

"We would be honoured if you would let us inside and let us have a talk with you your majesty." said Sora, bowing politely.

"Well you can come in if you want." said Matilda "My dad's not home at the moment. He's…"

"…picking up the pieces at the Festival of the Breezing Winds." said Joel "We know, we were there tonight."

"Oh." said Matilda "Right. Ahem…come in if you please."

Sora and Joel politely bowed to Matilda and they walked into the pagoda. Matilda shut the door and Sora and Joel relaxed themselves on a pair of cushions.

"Can I get you anything?" asked Matilda politely.

"We're OK thanks princess." said Sora "Don't fuss over us."

"Sorry, I tend to go overboard with my manners when we have guests." said Matilda "So, what do you want to talk to me about? And how did you find this pagoda?"

"We've been to Chun-Nan before." said Joel "We know our way around the country blindfolded. And we're here to talk about the disaster tonight."

"Oh." muttered Matilda, sitting down on a cushion beside Sora "You saw how I was "frolicking about on the rooftops" and how I "bombed the rooftops" did you?"

"We did." said Sora with a guilty look on her face "And we would like to apologize for all this. You see, the mess you've ended up in is… ahem…our fault."

"It is? Why?" asked Matilda.

"We were trying to bomb Fong Zarr but we kept missing and hitting the rooftops." explained Sora "We accidentally hit you and that in turn, caused you to fly into the fan and break it. I guess from your dad's point of view, it looked like the bombing was your doing."

"So it was you two throwing those bombs?" said Matilda, feeling a little cross with the spies for they were the ones that had gotten her in trouble with her dad "And you almost ended up killing me as

well?"

"We hit you by accident!" shrieked Sora "We swear! We're spies and we're here to investigate the festival follies, not assassinate you!"

"Spies? You two are spies?" said Matilda, clearly fascinated by this "Well why didn't you tell me that when I answered the door?"

"You didn't ask." said Joel "My name is Joel Nutmeg by the way."

"And my name is Sora Sumdac." introduced Sora "There's no need to introduce yourself Matilda, we know who you are."

"OK." said Matilda, not surprised by that since everybody knew who she was and who her dad was as well "So, if you two are spies, then what are you spying on?"

"The Yīnyǐng Mao clan." said Sora, her face looked grave "We've discovered that they are the ones sabotaging the Five Festivals of Holy Honour."

Matilda looked like someone had just pulled a knife on her.

"The Yīnyǐng Mao…what?" she screamed "That's disgusting! They're the one's ruining the festivals? Well I should have guessed seeing as Fong Zarr was here tonight! But the Yīnyǐng Mao clan are thieves, not terrorists! Why have they had a sudden change of tone?"

"Even we don't know." said Joel "We believe they're working for somebody as Sora claims to have heard Fong Zarr mentioning a master of some kind."

"Master?" mused Matilda "I thought Fong Zarr was the leader of the clan."

"He probably is." said Sora "It's obvious the Yīnyǐng Mao clan is working for somebody. Why is anyone's guess but we're determined to find out."

"I wonder if that stranger I saw on the rooftops is connected to the festival folly in anyway." thought Matilda "Everything was fine until

he showed up and everything goes wrong."

"Stranger?" asked Sora "What stranger?"

"Before I could do my wind-dance, I saw a suited figure on the rooftops." explained Matilda "It was suited from head to foot and it had a gliding apparatus on its back and two swords came out of it's wrists. It doesn't seem to be able to talk as it didn't answer me when I asked it but it looks vicious."

"Maybe this stranger could be a servant for the Yīnyǐng Mao." thought Joel "Or maybe he's the master they're working for."

"Nevertheless, we must find out more about this festival folly plot and find out who's behind all this and stop it before the next two festivals can be ruined." declared Sora "Matilda, would you care to join us?"

"I would love to." said Matilda, clenching her fists "I'd love to get some much needed payback on Fong Zarr and his ninja kitties for ruining my dad's festivals!"

"But your highness, you don't have any fighting abilities of any kind do you?" asked Joel, trying not to sound rude "I mean, this is going to be a dangerous mission you know."

"I can fight." said Matilda in a not very prideful manner "I am a secret kung-fu warrior in training and I am able to hold my own against Bladefeather and Mushu both together, and they're kung-fu masters."

"You can fight?" cried Sora "You know kung-fu? You're not just a typical princess are you?"

"I'm not pleased to be a kung-fu warrior." muttered Matilda "I hate violence, but my dad's too weak to learn kung-fu himself so I learnt kung-fu so I could protect him from harm."

"Aw, you're one devoted daughter aren't you?" said Sora, touched by Matilda's statement "I wish all children could be like that to their parents. Ahem, so, you're coming with us. We know were the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's hideout is so we shall go there and spy on

them."

"I don't think now's a good idea." said Matilda "It's getting a little late and I falter when I'm tired. We should go tomorrow first thing in the morning."

"Fair enough." said Sora "We spies need our sleep too or we can't get the information we need. We'll be going now we have a plan. Meet us at the local bamboo forest the moment you awake princess. Don't tell anyone, even your dad about us please, we reveal ourselves when we want to."

"OK then." said Matilda "Goodbye Sora and Joel. See you in the morning."

"Goodbye your highness." said Sora with a polite bow "Tomorrow, the festival folly ends at long last."

Sora and Joel got up from their cushions and they left the Pagoda of Prosperity behind, leaving Matilda alone in the living room. Matilda smiled happily to herself. She now knew who was behind the festival follies and she along with her new friends would foil the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's horrendous plan. She would be a hero and she would honour her father once again, as well as all the people of Chun-Nan and no one would ever have to worry about the festivals being ruined ever again…

Matilda, Sora and Joel are going to battle the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and stop them from ruining the festivals! Will they succeed? Or will the Yīnyǐng Mao clan come out on top? Join me next time as things get really kick ass! Reviews are welcome.

This chap was re-uploaded because I felt the original was a bit short and there were some spelling mistakes I had to fix.

The Five Festivals of ChunNan 3

Arc 6:The Five Festivals of Chun-Nan

Part 3

The next morning and came and the moment Princess Matilda woke up, she quietly got out of bed, dressed herself, had a bowl of wontons to keep her going on this mission and sneaked out of the Pagoda of Prosperity while her father was still asleep. She had scribbled a note and left it on the table for Emperor Tai to see when he woke up. The moment Matilda had managed to escape from her home, she ran for it as fast as she possibly could. Kung-fu warriors were fast runners and they were not only good at running fast, but they could run silently too so no one would hear Matilda. She ran towards the local bamboo forest which was located not far away from the Pagoda of Prosperity so Matilda didn't have that far of a run. In a matter of minutes, she reached the bamboo forest where the two spies, Sora Sumdac and Joel Nutmeg were patiently waiting for her. Their faces brightened when Matilda finally arrived to their meeting place.

"Good morning Princess." said Sora kindly.

"You can just call me Matilda Sora." said Matilda "So, I guess we're ready to storm the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple?"

"We are indeed." said Sora with a bright smile on her face "Me and Joel know where the temple is so we shall lead the way. I know how to get in the temple without being spotted so I'll be in charge of breaking us in."

"When we get into the temple, we will ambush those ninja cats and hopefully, get them to inform us with some much needed information." said Joel "And then we shall foil their plan and bring an end to this festival folly."

"I'll do the ambushing." said Matilda, cracking her knuckles "I have the muscle for it."

"Alright then." said Sora "Me and Joel will get us in, and you will ambush the entire clan. We get them to talk, we ruin their plan, reveal them to the public and the whole Yīnyǐng Mao clan will be incarcerated."

"I hope so." said Matilda "They belong in a prison cell just like that terrible Zira the Ruthless witch."

"Who's Zira the Ruthless?" asked Sora.

"A demon. That's all you need to know." said Matilda grimly "She's incarcerated so we don't have to worry about her."

"OK then." said Sora "Are you ready to go Matilda?"

"Whenever there's a situation involving saving lives and saving my country, I'm always ready." said Matilda with a brave face on.

"Then let's go to the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple." ordered Joel "The fate of Chun-Nan and the Five Festivals of Folly lies in our hands."

Sora and Joel ran off into the bamboo forests with Matilda following them. So she could get through the forest easier, she leaped onto the bamboo trees and off of them, effortlessly weaving her way through the forests as if she was a snake slithering through the grass. Sora and Joel could see Matilda's amazing flexibility over their shoulders and they were well and truly impressed.

"Well she did say she knows kung-fu." said Joel "Kung-fu gives the learner amazing flexibility as well as amazing strength."

"At least she'll keep up with us." said Sora, dodging another bamboo tree as she ran through the forest.

The three Mobians moved on through the bamboo trees and onto the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple. Once there, they would put an end to the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's nefarious plot and bring honour and glory back to Chun-Nan…

Back at the Pagoda of Prosperity, Tai had finally woken up and the

first thing he found was Matilda's note on the table for him and he grabbed the note. He read it quickly.

"Dear Father,

I know who's ruining the Five Festivals of Holy Honour. It is the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and me, along with two spies are going to their temple to stop them from ruining the last two festivals. Please don't worry about me. I'll be fine. I'll be back as soon as the Yīnyǐng Mao clan is defeated. Honour and glory shall return to our festivals!

Yours lovingly, Dalon Matilda."

The note made Tai feel both happy and horrified at the same time. He was happy that his daughter wasn't the cause of the festivals being ruined and that she had found out who it was but he was horrified at the same time that it was the Yīnyǐng Mao clan behind all this and she was going to fight them herself. He shouldn't worry about Matilda seeing as she knew kung-fu and could hold her own against two kung-fu masters so the Yīnyǐng Mao clan would be no match for her. Only…she wasn't very skilled in taking on large numbers by herself. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan had many ninjas and even someone as strong as Matilda couldn't fight them ALL off.

"Matilda, I'm so glad you've found out who's wrecking the festivals but did you have to fight the Yīnyǐng Mao clan alone?" said Tai sadly "You won't be able to fight all of those ninjas by yourself! Couldn't you have asked Bladefeather and Mushu to help you?"

That's when Tai was struck by an idea.

"Wait, that's it." he said to himself "I'll send Bladefeather and Mushu to assist her immediately! I do hope Matilda won't be too cross with me for sending help for her."

He then proceeded to grab a pen and scrawl a note of his own.

"I do hope Bladefeather and Mushu are at their temples." Tai said to himself "Otherwise this note will have to wait."

And wait, he couldn't knowing his daughter was going on a perilous mission with a couple of spies. He needed to deliver the letter to

them as soon as possible or Matilda's help would be delayed…

An hour later, Matilda, Sora and Joel arrived at the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple. Sora recognized its appearance to even the littlest detail as she had been to this temple three nights ago. The temple, even in the daytime, looked very formidable and intimidating looking. Matilda had never been to the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple before so this was a new experience for her, meeting the Yīnyǐng Mao clan in their own home. The temple's appearance disgusted her but she wasn't the least bit scared by it. She began to picture how the temple would look if she lived there instead of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan. It would look much nicer and more inviting then this temple.

"So this is where those horrible ninja kitties live." mused Matilda "Its uglier then I imagined."

"I know." said Sora "I spied on this place three nights ago. That's how I discovered this whole folly in the first place. And how I discovered the fate of poor Ricardo Ringtail." she muttered, remembering the death of her agent at the hands of the insidious shadow cats.

"Ah, Ricardo was a good agent Sora." said Joel "The S.I.I.D. was devastated to hear about the death of such a high ranking agent. True he may not have been part of our organization but any member of the M.S.I.U. is an ally of the S.I.I.D. agents."

"I know." said Sora "Now, let's get into this thing."

"How do you plan on doing that then?" asked Matilda.

Sora just strode up to the temple and pulled an orb off her belt and aimed it up at one of the curved up corners on the edge of the roof. She pressed a button and a grappling hook fired up at the corner. The hook embedded itself into the roof and Sora pulled on the rope to make sure the rope was tight. Sora then proceeded to climb up the rope and up towards the roof. Joel climbed up after her. Matilda climbed up after Joel. She'd had climbing lessons from her kung-fu teacher so she knew how to climb ropes easily. The three Mobians

climbed up the rope and up towards the roof, climbing slowly and steadily. Matilda kept a nervous look around to make sure no ninjas were watching them. There was no one around so their break in would be completely unexpected. The three Mobians reached the roof and they climbed onto it. They crawled up the tiles and up to a window which still had a hole in it from when Sora had broken three nights ago. Sora and Joel climbed through the window and Matilda looked over her shoulder again to make sure no one was watching. She then crawled through the hole in the window and found herself inside the temple's attic along with Sora and Joel. Unlike the night Sora investigated the attic, the attic was completely bare with no boxes or crates anywhere. They were all clearly being used for the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's grand scheme. Sora crept over to the trapdoor and she opened it. To her horror, two cats were standing guard under the trap door and the fact she'd opened it alerted them to her presence. The two cats climbed up the ladder, which slid out after the door was opened, and into the attic. Matilda swiftly gave them both an uppercut to the chin and knocked them both out. Sora was impressed by how swiftly she had taken them out.

"You really are strong Matilda." she complimented.

"Thank you." said Matilda.

She picked the knocked out cats up by their scruffs and altered their mouths to make it look like they were smiling. They looked pretty stupid now with their grinning mouths and closed eyes. Sora resisted the urge to laugh at the knocked out cats. Matilda crept down the ladder, still holding the two cats, and Sora and Joel followed her. They closed the trapdoor and crept down the hall They kept close to Matilda while Matilda kept the cats help up high to hide herself. They all crept down the hallway and towards the door at the end of the hall. Fong Zarr came through the door, laughing to himself.

"Rrradiant! Simply rrradiant!" he cackled to himself "I can't wait for the Festival of the Rrraging Fire to go up in flames! Well, bigger flames that is."

Matilda and the spies stopped in their tracks and Matilda lifted one of the knocked out cat's arms and waved at Fong Zarr.

"Hey." she said in her best impression of a man's voice.

Fong Zarr saw the two grinning, unconscious cats standing before him.

"Hey." he said, failing to see Matilda behind that disguise.

Matilda then quickly ran out of the hall while still holding the two cats. Fong Zarr scratched his head and wondered to himself.

"They seem unusually happy today. They don't usually smile." he mused "Oh well. It's our brilliant plan working to perfection that's making them happy."

Matilda and the spies found themselves in the room where the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was working and piling the boxes up ready for use. Matilda crept across the balcony and headed to the stairs until suddenly…

"Oy!" yelled a ninja cat with an annoying gravely voice and a Scottish accent "Where do ya two wazzocks think yer going?"

Matilda's heart leapt in surprise and she quickly dumped the knocked out cats and hid behind a bunch of crates before she could get found out. Sora and Joel hid with her. The Scottish cat stomped up to the smiling, knocked out cats and growled at them. It was quite clear he wasn't happy to see two of his lackeys lying around on the job smiling like idiots while he had to work.

"Stop lounging around you lazy cats and get back to work!" he yelled.

He then grabbed the cats by their scruffs and shook them around.

"And wipe those gormless grins of yer faces! Ya don't get paid to smile you daft cats!" growled the Scottish cat.

Matilda and the spies kept low and waited for the Scottish cat to take the knocked out cats away. The moment the cost was clear, they crept out from their hiding place and crept up to the railing. They peered through the bars and looked down at what was going on. Lord Vharr was there and he was ordering the cats around like an

overly bossy business man who treated his minions like slaves. The cats were running around and around fetching crates and stacking boxes. Lord Vharr just stood there and barked orders at them.

"Get to it you cats!" he bellowed in his robotical sounding voice, caused by the helmet he wore "We must be ready for the Festival of the Raging Fire! I know its early morning but the earlier we are, the better prepared we are now get on with it!"

The cats picked up the pace and worked a little faster. Matilda's blood boiled at the sight of Lord Vharr.

"There he is." she said "That's the mysterious creature I saw last night."

"Who the heck is he?" whispered Sora.

"Don't know, he didn't reveal his name to me." said Matilda.

"Whoever he is, he looks like bad news." said Joel "Maybe he's the master they were walking about the night you spied on them Sora."

"I'm willing to bet he is." said Sora "We should take him down as well as Fong Zarr and his cronies."

"Rrreally spies?" snarled a gravely voice from behind their backs "And how do you plan to do that then?"

Matilda and the spies turned around and saw Fong Zarr, glaring at them with his steely eyes. He looked like a cat that was ready to bite its owner on the hand for tormenting it. Fong Zarr had heard Matilda and the spies talking to one another outside the hall so he came in to see what was going on. Matilda leaped onto her feet and she socked Fong Zarr in the face. The clan leader staggered backwards and crashed into the crates they were hiding behind earlier and smashed them to pieces. Matilda then proceeded to grab Fong Zarr's arm and then toss him over the railing and onto the ground at the bottom of the stairs. Fong Zarr crashed head first into the boxes and crates down below, startling all his cronies and Lord Vharr. The crates were all destroyed by Zarr and their contents spilled everywhere on the floor. Lord Vharr went livid with rage.

"What happened Fong Zarr?" yelled Lord Vharr.

Just as he asked that, Matilda leaped into the air, did an amazing somersault and landed down on the ground below. She landed perfectly on her feet and the two spies ran down the stairs to join her. Lord Vharr glared at Matilda angrily.

"Ah, I remember you." he growled "You're that girl who chased me on the rooftops last night."

"Yes. Yes I am." said Matilda coldly "I am Princess Matilda, daughter of our current emperor and I am going to put and end to your festival folly."

"How do you know of our plans?" snapped Lord Vharr.

"We told her." said Sora with a smirk on her face "She knows everything about your plot now mysterious creature."

Lord Vharr's response was to laugh at the top of his voice and all the other ninja cats laughed with him. Matilda just prepared to fight as she could see one coming. Lord Vharr stopped laughing and he fixed his gaze back onto Matilda.

"You know nothing of our plot child!" gloated Lord Vharr "You know about the festival wrecking we've been doing, but you don't know about the grandest part of our plan!"

"What do you mean?" asked Matilda.

"You'll see." crowed Lord Vharr "Fong Zarr, Shadow Cats! Seize those spies and lock them up!" he bellowed.

Fong Zarr picked himself up out of the wreckage of the crates and boxes and pounced into action. All the other ninjas drew their weapons and immediately pounced on the spies. Matilda just let them come to her with their weapons blazing, their fangs bared and their eyes narrowed. Before anyone could lay a finger on her, Matilda began to spin around on the spot in a circle with her arms spread out. She whacked every ninja that got close to her and sent them hurling backwards and crashing into the wall. The room was filled with ninja flying everywhere and crashing into walls and even

the ceiling. Matilda stopped spinning around and grabbed a ninja that was coming to her by the neck. She proceeded to spin the ninja around and then toss it into Lord Vharr. The suited warrior was knocked off his feet and onto his back. Fong Zarr drew out his twin katanas, which were spares to replace the ones Joel had sliced in half last night, and he swung the swords at Matilda. Matilda held up her arms and blocked the blows of the katanas with her black wristbands. These wristbands could deflect bullets so a sword was no match for them. Fong Zarr slashed at Matilda again but Matilda dodged the katanas by bending over backwards. Fong Zarr then tried to slash Matilda but Matilda caught the blade with her bare hands and held it there. Fong Zarr tried to pull the katana out of Matilda's grip but the kung-fu princess had too tough a grip for Fong Zarr to pull his weapons out of. Matilda then proceeded to sharply pull the katana to one side and break the blade in half. Fong Zarr got mad and he tried to let Matilda have it with his other katana. Matilda just grabbed Fong Zarr's wrist and twisted in sharply, forcing him to let go of the katana and drop it onto the floor. Matilda, while still holding Fong Zarr's wrist, kneed the ninja cat in the stomach and then head butted him in the forehead. The move left Fong Zarr very dizzy and heavily stunned. Matilda took advantage of this situation and began to rapidly kick Fong Zarr all over his body. Fong Zarr was kicked in the face, the gut, the legs and even his chest. Matilda then gave Fong Zarr a tremendous uppercut the sent the ninja cat hurling into the other side of the room. He crashed into the wall and cracked it. Matilda dusted her hands off and strode up to the ninja cat. Sora and Joel had watched the whole fight with amazement and they could not believe how powerful the mongoose in the purple dress was.

"She means business, doesn't she Joel?" gasped Sora.

"She'd make a very good spy she would." said Joel "She'd bust her way out of any situation."

Fong Zarr rubbed his throbbing head and sat up with his back against the wall. He then suddenly cowered in fear as Matilda advanced on him with a cold expression on her face, an expression she rarely used. Matilda grabbed Fong Zarr by the scruff of his coat and hoisted him onto his feet while keeping him pinned to the wall.

Fong Zarr looked like he was about to do a poop in his pants as Matilda glared at him.

"No! No! Please! No! No!" screamed Fong Zarr "Don't hurt me! Please! No!"

"Give me a good reason why I shouldn't!" snapped Matilda "You're ruining my daddy's festivals and dishonouring everybody in Chun-Nan! You deserve a good beating Fong Zarr!"

Despite being a violence hater, Matilda knew that violence was necessary in this situation and Fong Zarr deserved to be beaten up so she decided to do it without hesitation. She drew her arm back, earning a terrified expression from Fong Zarr, and was about to knock Fong Zarr's daylights out with one hefty punch until suddenly, Lord Vharr appeared from behind and pinched her on the neck. Matilda gasped in surprise and then she suddenly fainted onto the floor. Sora and Joel gasped in horror. Matilda was on top of the entire clan and she gets defeated when so close to making Fong Zarr pay for his crimes! Before Sora and Joel could help Matilda, two ninjas grabbed them both and wrapped their arms around their necks. They struggled in the cat's grasps but they just couldn't get free, they were much too tough. Fong Zarr breathed heavily, his heart pounding, and sighed with relief at the sight of Matilda lying on the floor unconscious.

"Thank you Lord Vharr!" gasped Fong Zarr "How did you do that?"

"Nerve pinch." explained Lord Vharr "It can be a deadly weapon when used right. I pinched the right nerve on Matilda and I've knocked her out. She'll be awake in a few hours, more then enough time to lock her away and restrain her."

"Lock her away?" blurted Fong Zarr "Lord Vharr, are you insane? We should kill the stupid princess rrrright now! She's too dangerous to be kept alive! She's too powerful for us!"

"I am in charge and I decide when we don't need Matilda anymore!" snapped Lord Vharr "I want to see the pleasure of watching her cry her heart out as her dad is destroyed tomorrow night so she will stay alive until tomorrow night!"

"Dad is destroyed tomorrow night?" piped Sora who had clearly heard everything Lord Vharr said "Are you plotting…to assassinate the emperor?"

Lord Vharr face-palmed himself. He'd just accidentally revealed the grand part of his plan to the enemy! Oh well, nothing to worry about, he could just kill them and get them out of the way so they couldn't reveal anything.

"Ninjas! Kill those spies!" he ordered "Fong Zarr, take Matilda to the dungeon!"

"Yes lord." said Fong Zarr, scooping Matilda up and draping her over his shoulder.

He left the room and carried her off to the dungeon. As for Sora and Joel, Two ninja cats drew out a katana each and prepared to skewer Sora and Joel like a pair of kebabs. The cats holding them held them in place while the cats with the katanas prepared to stab them. Sora's heart began to pound and her head poured with sweat. She couldn't see anyway out of this. She couldn't use her spray for her arms were being held out to the sides so she couldn't reach her belt and Joel needed to activate the laser in his orb-cam eye manually so he couldn't use his orb-cam eye to save them. However…Sora's legs weren't restrained so out of sheer desperation, she kicked the cat holding her as hard as she could in the shin. The cat yelped and grabbed his shin. One of the cats with the katanas lunged at Sora but Sora jumped out of the way, causing the cat to accidentally stab the one that she'd just kicked. As for Joel, he tried the same method but the other cat with a katana didn't lunge for him in fear of accidentally stabbing his comrade. Sora and Joel immediately ran for it as fast as they could but a group of ninjas blocked the way out at the top of the stairs. Sora and Joel were completely trapped, there was no way out of this situation. Sora then remembered her utility belt. She could use her gadgets to get out of the situation. But before she could use it, a cat sneaked up behind her and sliced the belt from behind with a dagger, causing it to fall off and drape around her ankles. The cat snatched the belt and tossed it away, the belt landed with a soft clunk on the floor at the bottom of the stairs. The two spies stood close to each other as the ninjas advanced on them. Lord Vharr then gave a command from down below.

"I've changed my mind! Take the spies to the dungeon!" he ordered "I think I'll let Matilda have the displeasure of watching them die as they seem to be friends of hers!"

The cats obeyed and they grabbed Sora and Joel. They left the room and carried the two spies off to the dungeon. As for Lord Vharr, he left the room too. He had last minute preparations to make for tonight's festival folly so he went off to make them. He could almost picture Matilda's horrified face as the Festival of the Raging Fire went up in flames and even more so, Matilda's expression when her father was killed in the Festival of the Peaceful Earth and he would then kill Matilda and take her father's place as emperor of Chun-Nan where he would rule the country with fear, villainy, discipline and honour…

Meanwhile, Bladefeather the Falcon and Mushu the Iguana were at Master Gāng's temple. Master Gāng was the kung-fu porcupine master who taught Bladefeather and Mushu everything he knew and right now, he and his students were discussing about the remaining two festivals and whether they should carry on as planned.

"Master Gāng, you know just as well as we do that the Five Festivals of Holy Honour have done nothing but fall into relapse." said Bladefeather "Nothing but baneful happenings have commenced in this years weekly festivals. So I propose that we arbitrate the conditions of whether the festivals are safe or not by continuing as we've planned and have some one on look out for saboteurs."

"That is a nice idea Bladefeather but I don't think we should risk it." said the aged porcupine master grimly "I mean, we don't even know what's causing the festivals to end in disaster. I know Tai reckons his daughter was the cause of last night's festival disaster but I refuse to believe a girl as sweet and innocent as Matilda could do something like that. I reckon there are saboteurs behind all this like Governor Shen does. "

"So what do you propose master?" asked Bladefeather.

"That we postpone the last two festivals until further notice." said Master Gāng "If nothing happens then Governor Shen's theory will be correct. The festivals are indeed being sabotaged."

"Well it's not our place to arbitrate conditions like these." noted Bladefeather "It's all up to the emperor to decide. I can't imagine he'll be arbitrary about this."

Then suddenly, there was a knock on the door. Bladefeather and Master Gāng were both surprised by this.

"Who could that be?" wondered Master Gāng "Mushu, will you be a good boy and get that please?"

Mushu nodded and he got up to his feet. He walked over to the door and he opened it. To his surprise, Emperor Dalon Tai was standing there looking frantic.

"Mushu! What serendipity!" he cried "I've managed to find you! You and Bladefeather must see this note and you must see it now!"

Bladefeather hopped to his feet and he ran over to Mushu. Tai, panting heavily, passed the kung-fu masters the note and they both read it quickly. After reading the note, Bladefeather looked up from it and looked back at Tai.

"So the princess somehow knows who's sabotaging the festivals and she's gone to face the Yīnyǐng Mao clan?" said Bladefeather slowly.

"Yes!" cried Tai "But she's not skilled enough to take on large groups by herself! Those shadow cats will kill her!"

"No they will not." said Bladefeather "Matilda can refute the two of us, me and Mushu, together, those pesky kitties will be no match for her. Matilda's too vigorous for them."

"I know but Matilda isn't skilled against large groups!" repeated Tai "I need you two to join her in this heist on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple!"

"Well if you wish for us to accompany Matilda in her mission, we will

do so." said Bladefeather "Luckily for us, we know were the Yīnyǐng Mao clan lives. When we were forced to work for Zira, she took us to the clan's temple so she could get them to swear fealty to her."

"That's good!" said Tai with relief "You may go when ready."

"Before we leave emperor." said Bladefeather "Master Gāng has a question for you."

Master Gāng wondered over to the emperor and bowed to him respectfully. He then said.

"Do you think we should postpone the last two festivals or should we go on with them and have someone look out for saboteurs?" he asked.

Tai thought on that subject for a moment. On the one hand, the Five Festivals of Holy Honour were a grand celebration and everybody loved them. On the other hand, if the Yīnyǐng Mao clan kept wrecking them, what was the point of continuing with the festivals? The next two were bound to end in disaster so it would be wise to postpone the festivals and bring the Yīnyǐng Mao clan to justice. That way everybody would be safe and nothing could go wrong. Tai sighed sadly and said.

"I think we should postpone the Five Festivals." he said "With the first three ending badly, I can't risk the other two ending badly. The Five Festivals of Holy Honour will not commence until we've arrested the Yīnyǐng Mao clan."

"Wise idea emperor." said Master Gāng "I'm sure Governor Shen would have thought the same thing."

"Now our curiosity has been satisfied, me and Mushu shall go now." said Bladefeather "Wish us luck emperor."

"You don't need it." said Tai "I just want you two to keep my daughter safe and help her to the best of your ability."

"We shall make that our only priority." said Bladefeather "I bid you valediction and we shall return as soon as we can."

And with that, Bladefeather and Mushu ran out of the temple and Bladefeather, with a flap of his magnificent wings, took to the skies. He grabbed Mushu with his talons and he carried him off the ground. The two kung-fu masters headed for Chun-Nan. Unfortunately, Lord Vharr had been spying on them and after hearing about the cancellation of the festivals and Bladefeather and Mushu's aiding in stopping their plans, he decided that he would have to make a change of plan otherwise his entire operation would be in complete folly…

Matilda had been out for a few hours but she finally came to. She opened her eyes and mumbled sleepily. The first thing suddenly noticed when she awoke is that she was not in the storage room, she was in a dungeon. The walls all had shackles hanging from them, there were skeletons of what were once prisoners of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and the walls were stained horribly. Matilda then noticed that she was not firmly placed on the ground. She was hanging off the ground by her arms and her arms were being held firmly over her head by chains from the ceiling. The princess was horrified, she was a prisoner of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!

"What?" she shrieked, looking up at her chained arms "I'm in chains! How did this happen? How did I get here?"

"You're not the only one here Matilda." came a voice she was familiar with.

Matilda looked to her side and noticed that Sora and Joel were also in the dungeon with her. They were chained to the wall by their arms and legs so they were going nowhere in a hurry. Matilda was glad to see they were OK but she wasn't glad that they were imprisoned with her.

"Sora! Joel! How did I end up in here?" she asked.

"That suited figure, Lord Vharr according to Fong Zarr, knocked you out with a nerve pinch and Fong Zarr took you here." explained Sora "They don't want to kill you yet because they want the pleasure of watching your reaction when they kill the emperor."

"When they…what?" shrieked Matilda "My dad's being targeted by the Yīnyǐng Mao clan?"

"Yes." said Joel "Lord Vharr's waiting until tomorrow for some reason."

"Well I've got to get out of here!" cried Matilda, struggling in her bonds but being as she was hanging off the ground by her arms, she couldn't really pull on the chains and break them "Tomorrow, they're going to kill my dad! I've got to stop them!"

"You cannot stop us princess." growled a voice Matilda did not want to hear right now "Not while you're in our claws."

Fong Zarr entered the dungeon with three cats by his side. The cats were armed with spears and the fact they were armed with them made Matilda nervous. Were they going to torture her with the spears? Fong Zarr smiled evilly at the chained up princess. It gave him great pleasure to see a dangerous enemy restrained and completely at his mercy. Matilda just glared at him. She was not going to give that demon Fong Zarr the satisfaction of seeing her scared.

"OK you unrighteous monster, why do you want to kill my father?" demanded Matilda coldly.

"Am I right to guess those idiot spies have spilled the rrrice on you?" muttered Fong Zarr "Oh well, you can't go anywhere so you can't tell anybody about our plans. We wish to kill your father because we don't like him his emperor. He made us outsiders and he is crrruel to us…"

"No he's not!" retorted Matilda, making her chains rattle "He's doing the right thing! You are thieves and mercenaries so you deserve to be in exile you monsters!"

"Exactly!" snapped Fong Zarr "That's why we hate him! We want him dead and we want a proper emperor on the thrrrrone! An emperor who will treat us shadow cats with some well deserved rrrespect! Lord Vharr promises us frrreedom and all the fun we can have so we want to kill that idiot Dalon Tai and replace him with Lord

Vharr! That way, we Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas can do what we please and no one can say no to us!"

"So if you want my father dead, why haven't you done so already?" asked Matilda "Why are you pillaging the festivals and wrecking everything?"

"The idea behind all this is that wrecking the festivals, which are organized by the emperor himself," explained Fong Zarr "Will lower everybody's reliance on Tai and make them afraid. Then when Tai ends up getting killed, everybody will scream in terror and cry for a new emperor and Lord Vharr will make his move! Then once he becomes emperor, we will be free and you will be rotting inside a coffin buried under tonnes of dirt along with your father! Your father's reign ends, your reign ends before it begins and Lord Vharr's reign begins on the thrrrrone of Chun-Nan! People will bow to him and he, along with us, will become the supreme warriors in all of Chun-Nan!"

"No you won't!" retorted Matilda "I will stop you vile beasts and I will save Chun-Nan from your master's wrath!"

"And how do you wish to accomplish that you stupid woman?" sneered Fong Zarr "You're in chains and helpless to stop us. You'll be here until tomorrow night because once Tai dies, you die."

He motioned to the cats holding the spears. Matilda could tell from the look in thier eyes that they were itching to stab her. Matilda didn't alter her expression at all. She was a brave girl who didn't show fear at anything, regardless of how threatening it looks. Fong Zarr seemed miffed at the fact Matilda didn't even flinch at the spears but he shook it off. He turned to the third cat.

"Kill the spies." he ordered "Kill them with the flamethrower."

"Yes sir." said the cat, running over to an object in the wall.

"You two stand guard and make sure Matilda doesn't escape." ordered Fong Zarr.

"Yes Fong Zarr." said the cats with a salute.

The two cats with the spears stood on either side of Matilda and stood to attention. Matilda just glared at them and watched as the third cat pulled something out of the wall in the corner. It was a huge flamethrower shaped like a dragon's head and it was pushed around on wheels. The weapon stayed in the wall disguised as a brick when not in use and now the ninja cat was going to use it to burn Sora and Joel alive. Sora and Joel flinched in fear at the sight of the weapon. Matilda stared in horror at the flamethrower and began to grow increasingly worried for the spies. Fong Zarr just turned his back on the imprisoned princess and left the dungeon. The door closed shut and Fong Zarr locked it. Matilda was now trapped in the dungeon with the spies, which were about to become barbecue steaks, and two guards, which would end up killing her tomorrow night. The princess was not going to give up so easily. She was going to escape and stop the insidious Yīnyǐng Mao clan from wrecking the last two festivals and killing her father. Luckily she had an escape plan. She watched as the cat with the flamethrower switched the flamethrower on. A large flame spouted out from the mouth of the flamethrower and the cat inched it towards Sora and Joel. The spies just closed their eyes and awaited their doom. Now was the time to launch her plan. Matilda noticed how the guards were standing plenty close enough for her to kick them. But she didn't want to kick them, she wanted to do something else. Matilda swung herself forward with her legs and she wrapped them around the guard on her left's neck. The guard squealed and gagged and he dropped his spear. Matilda wrapped her legs tightly around the guard, so tightly the guard couldn't get free. The other guard reacted and pointed his spear at Matilda's chest. Matilda shot him a death glare, a glare not often used by her.

"Release me!" she ordered "Or I'll kill him!"

She made a threatening gesture with her legs as if she was planning to break the guard's neck with her bare legs. Matilda really didn't want to kill the guard but in order to get free; she had to threaten his life. The other guard didn't want his friend to die so he threw his spear onto the ground in surrender. He pulled a remote out of his pocket and he pointed it at Matilda's shackles. He pressed a button on the remote and the shackles opened, freeing Matilda's arms from their grasp and the princess dropped onto the floor, relieved to be

free. The guard that she threatened to kill immediately picked up his spear and tried to stab her in the back with it but Matilda kicked backwards and hit him in the groin. The guard gasped in shock and he fell down on his knees. Matilda then grabbed the spear and whacked the other guard with it before he could attempt to attack her. The other guard crashed into the flamethrower cat and knocked him away from the heavy weapon, stopping it from getting any closer to Sora and Joel. Matilda ran over to the flamethrower and switched it off. She kicked the weapon away, leaving it to crash into the wall and knock some bricks down and then with a hefty chop of the hand, she broke Sora and Joel's chains, freeing them from the wall. Sora and Joel immediately hugged Matilda for saving them.

"Oh thank you princess!" cried Sora.

"We were almost done for." said Joel "Brilliant idea it was to exchange the guard's life for your freedom."

"I'm not pleased I had to resort to this." said Matilda grimly "It felt horrible, threatening to kill somebody. But it had to be done. Now we're free, we can stop Lord Vharr and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan from killing my dad!"

"I can't believe how vile those cats are!" spat Sora "Wrecking festivals just to scare everybody and then killing the emperor just so they can replace him with Lord Vharr! I've never in my life dealt with villains so vile before!"

"I never knew the Yīnyǐng Mao clan were so vile." said Matilda "They're worse then Zira the Ruthless. At the end of this day, they'll be sharing a cell with Zira!"

She then proceeded to march over to the dungeon door and punch it down with one punch for stress relief. The door lay in pieces on the floor and the three prisoners fled out of the dungeon. Sora just admired the broken door before fleeing for it.

"When you have a kung-fu princess on your side, you never need a key." she said to herself.

Now Matilda and the spies were free, they left the dungeon and

headed for the upper floors of the temple where Lord Vharr was likely to be. Once there, Matilda would engage him in combat, defeat him and save Chun-Nan from Lord Vharr and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan…

On the top floor of the temple, Lord Vharr had returned to the temple and he was discussing things with Fong Zarr.

"So is the princess secured?" he asked.

"Yes." said Fong Zarr "She's going nowhere. The spies are about to become rrred hot wontons as one of my men burns them with a flamethrower so no one can ruin our plans."

"Unfortunately, you're wrong." said Lord Vharr "I spied on the emperor and he just told Bladefeather and Mushu to join Matilda in wrecking our plans."

"What?" cried Fong Zarr "If they arrive, they'll free Matilda and everything will be in jeopardy!"

"No it won't." snapped Lord Vharr "I have a plan. I will set up an ambush at every door and every window. So no matter what way Bladefeather and Mushu choose to enter, they will be ambushed by your ninjas Fong Zarr."

"Ah! That's brilliant!" said Fong Zarr wickedly "We'll benefit even more from this as Bladefeather and Mushu are a thrrreat to your reign! Once we kill them, nothing will stand to us!"

"Agreed." said Lord Vharr "I've got other news as well. The emperor is postponing the last two festivals."

"Is he?" said Fong Zarr in surprise "Well that's inconvenient! Operation: Festival Folly will be interrupted!"

"True, but that's where the change of plan comes in." said Lord Vharr "We'll assassinate the emperor tonight instead. Festival or no festival, that emperor must be killed or I can't take over and fulfil my promise to you!"

"I understand master." said Fong Zarr "Luckily, the cannons which we were going to use tomorrow night are almost done. In an hour or so, they'll be rrready."

"It is already afternoon." noted Lord Vharr "We shall put the plan in motion the moment the evening arrives."

"Yes Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr with a bow "We'll be ready in no time."

And with that, the clan leader left the room and headed down to another floor. Lord Vharr stared out of the window and gazed at the horizon outside. If he wasn't wearing a helmet, you could probably see a sick, twisted, evil grin on his face.

"Tonight Tai, your reign ends!" he crowed to himself "And my reign…begins!"

Meanwhile, Matilda, Sora and Joel were climbing up the stairs to the upper floors of the temple. If Lord Vharr was anywhere right now, it would likely be the top floor which they had been in already. They had to climb a lot of stairs but stairs were no obstacle for Matilda, her determination to save the day was greater then any obstacle in the world. Not even a brick wall would slow this princess down. They had just made it halfway up the temple until Matilda noticed something was going on. The three Mobians hid behind a wall and they peeked around the corner to see what was happening. All of the ninja cats were gathering up together and standing guard at every window in the corridor. Sora looked further down the other corridor and noticed there were cats standing guard at a door at the end of the corridor. There were hundreds of ninja cats and they all seemed to be standing guard in front of a window or a door. This activity was making Matilda wonder on what was with the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's sudden guarding of the doors and windows.

"Hmm…why are all the cats standing guard in front of the doors and windows?" mused Matilda.

"I'm guessing they don't want us to escape." suggested Sora "Or

they don't want somebody to get in. It's likely to be they don't want us to escape I think. After all, once we foil the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's plan, we'll have to get out of here if we want to live to tell the tale."

"Well it's going to take more then a wall of ninjas to keep me trapped." said Matilda grimly "I think I'll take the liberty of knocking the wall down."

She cracked her knuckles and marched out of her hiding place and up towards the ninja cats blocking the windows. The ninja cats heard Matilda coming and they all ran to her with their weapons blazed. Matilda just let them come and waited for them to attack. The cats all leaped on Matilda and…Matilda ploughed her way through them all, throwing them and punching them this way and that. The cats all flew backwards and crashed into the wall or the floor. Some were unlucky enough to crash through the windows, break them and fall down to the ground. Matilda dusted her hands off and stood at the window.

"So much violence, I hope I never have to do this again." she muttered to herself "I feel like a brute and I don't like that."

She then noticed something in the distance. A little red speck was coming towards the temple. Matilda peered out of the window and into the distance, watching the speck. The speck was getting bigger and bigger as it came closer and closer to the temple. Matilda began to wonder who it was. Was it another kung-fu master that was coming to stop the Yīnyǐng Mao clan? Or was it a ninja working for the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and is providing back-up? The speck then came into view and Matilda's face brightened at what it really was. It was Bladefeather and he was carrying Mushu in his talons. The falcon swooped towards the broken window and Matilda stepped to the side so she wouldn't be in their way. Bladefeather and Mushu flew through the window and into the temple. Bladefeather put Mushu down and landed gently on the floor. Matilda's first response was to pounce on Bladefeather, catching him completely off guard, and wrap her arms around him. Bladefeather squawked in surprise but he recognized that soft, loving touch Matilda had so he relaxed. He was more surprised at the fact Matilda's first response was to hug him more then anything. Well she did love him after all and he lover her.

"Bladefeather you feathery fluff ball you!" squealed Matilda happily "I'm so glad you came!"

"I'm glad I came too." said Bladefeather, clearly enjoying Matilda's hug right now.

Mushu just laughed a weak, wheezing laugh at Bladefeather. The falcon shot him a death glare and Mushu stopped laughing. Matilda let go of Bladefeather and Bladefeather faced Matilda.

"Why are you here then?" asked Matilda "I'm glad you are here, don't get me wrong but why are you here?"

"Emperor Tai saw the note you left for him and was worried about you." explained Bladefeather "So he decided to send me and Mushu to abet you in your mission. He claims you are incapable of taking on a large group by yourself so he thinks you need some assistance."

"Oh dad!" groaned Matilda crossly "I've told him before I am capable of fighting a large group by myself! I just completed that lesson last week!"

"Really?" said Bladefeather "Oh well, we may as well help you put an end to the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's nefarious plot now we're here."

"The Yīnyǐng Mao clan can barely hold out against me so me with you two will be unbeatable." said Matilda with a determined smile on her pretty face.

"I couldn't acquiesce more Matilda." said Bladefeather with a grin on his face.

"Excuse us." interrupted Sora "We don't mean to interrupt but, Matilda who are these two?"

"These are two dear friends of mine and my dad." said Matilda "This is Bladefeather, and this is Mushu." she said, introducing the kung-fu masters to the spies "They're both kung-fu masters. Bladefeather's the Master of the Thousand Daggers and Mushu is strong but silent. He can't talk."

Mushu scowled to himself, clearly not happy with the fact he was permanently mute and that everybody had to say that about him. Bladefeather took one scowling look at Sora and Joel and he pointed a dagger at them. Sora leaped back in surprise.

"Who are you two scrounging mendicants then?" snorted Bladefeather.

"We peg your pardon Master Bladefeather." said Joel politely "We're spies working for two different organizations and we're assisting Princess Matilda in stopping the Yīnyǐng Mao clan from wrecking anymore festivals."

"Spies?" snorted Bladefeather "I abhor spies! Spies are always sticking their filthy little noses in places they don't belong in and then they eavesdrop on people's conversations! They're always getting people killed or themselves killed because of it! I however, will abide to spies who are on our side as they wish to aid us, not hinder us. I however, will not accede to you being near me little girl." he added sharply, pointing at Sora "I don't mean to be acrimonious to you but, my abhorrence for children is at a high level so I will be pleased if you can stay away from me."

"You hate children?" said Sora "OK, I'll respect that. I'm still technically a child as I'm only twelve right now so I can see why you don't seem fond of me."

"Good." said Bladefeather, pleased to see Sora was a mature child "What, may I ask, are your names you two little spies?"

"My name is Sora Sumdac and this is Joel Nutmeg." said Sora "We were the ones who found out the Yīnyǐng Mao clan were behind the festival folly so we informed Matilda and she came with us."

"That explains why she went off with two strangers without telling us." murmured Bladefeather, glaring at Matilda a little hurtfully.

"Sorry." said Matilda quickly "You're not going to believe this as well Bladefeather. Tomorrow night, when we have the Festival of the Peaceful Earth, the Yīnyǐng Mao clan is going to kill my dad!"

"They're going to execute the emperor?" shrieked Bladefeather "Oh of all the aberrant and unrighteous! I am personally going to relinquish those cats of their lives and believe me, I will show no lenience whatsoever on them!"

The falcon then suddenly calmed down and said "Anyway, their plan won't work because the emperor has postponed the last two festivals for safety reasons. Tonight and tomorrow night will not have a festival."

"Really?" said Matilda "Well, at least the Yīnyǐng Mao clan can't wreck them anymore. But…if they can't kill him at the festival…then won't that mean they'll try and kill him at a different time instead?"

"That is a possibility." said Sora "They may change their assassination attempt to another time. Festival or no festival, I can't imaging the Yīnyǐng Mao clan will back out of an assassination attempt like this."

"Then we must refute those scrounging, dis-honouree, demonic cats before they can attempt such an abysmal act!" declared Bladefeather "What is the plan Matilda?"

"Well, we were heading up to the top floor where Fong Zarr and his master Lord Vharr are likely to be." explained Matilda.

"Who's Lord Vharr?" asked Bladefeather.

"Fong Zarr's master." explained Sora "He's the one behind all this and we must stop him more then anyone."

"I didn't know Fong Zarr had a master." mused Bladefeather "But I bet he's as nefarious as Fong Zarr. Matilda, I'll fly you all up to the top floor so you don't have to use the stairs anymore. We'll get up there much quicker."

"Good plan Bladefeather." said Matilda.

Bladefeather then flapped his wings and rose off the ground. He grabbed Matilda by the wrists with his talons and carried her out through the broken window. He flew all the way up to the top of the temple and rested Matilda down on the roof in front of a window.

Matilda looked into the window while Bladefeather flew down to carry the others up. He grabbed Mushu with his talons and he carried the mute iguana up onto the temple roof. He put him down beside Matilda and the iguana kept a look out to make sure no Yīnyǐng Mao cats were watching. All clear. Bladefeather then flew down to the broken window and he grabbed Sora and Joel by their arms. He held Sora with one foot and Joel with the other. He flapped his graceful wings and he flew up to the roof with the spies in tow. When in flight, Bladefeather could carry objects many times his weight so two spies, one an adult and one just a twelve year old, were nothing to him. He settled the spies down on the roof and he touched down beside Matilda, who was still looking through the window. The window she was looking through was to the very room she and the spies in before they were briefly imprisoned. Lord Vharr and Fong Zarr were still there and Lord Vharr appeared to be giving out orders. The Yīnyǐng Mao cats were hauling very large and very heavy cannons to the centre of the room. The cannons were shaped like dragon-heads, much like the dungeon flamethrower, and they looked very powerful. One of those cannons could easily kill poor Emperor Tai or anybody for that matter. Seeing the cannon's made Matilda's blood boil in rage. She clenched her teeth and her tail quivered. Bladefeather and Mushu looked into the window and they weren't pleased with what they were looking at, they were just as horrified as Matilda was. Tai wouldn't stand a chance against those cannons! They had to destroy them before the Yīnyǐng Mao clan could use them!

"Look at those cannons!" blurted Bladefeather "We have got to stop those repugnant cats from using them on the emperor! He won't have a chance against a weapon that powerful!"

"You lot can all fight the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas." said Matilda dryly "Lord Vharr is mine. I owe him a broken leg for planning this festival folly in the first place!"

"Wow, for someone who hates violence, you sure are ready for a fight aren't you Matilda?" asked Joel.

"I do know when's the appropriate time to resort to violence and right now is one of those times." said Matilda "As much as I would rather find a peaceful solution, I really want to make a wonton out of Lord

Vharr for all his wrong doings."

"This is why I love this girl." Bladefeather whispered over to Mushu, earning a snarky grin from the silent iguana.

Matilda drew her arm back and with one powerful punch, broke the window into a thousand shards of glass. The glass all rained down onto the floor below. Lord Vharr and Fong Zarr heard the window shattering and they all looked up at the broken window only to see Matilda, Bladefeather, Mushu, Sora and Joel all standing there glaring down at them. Matilda leaped through the broken window, did an amazing, graceful somersault and she landed on her feet directly in front of Lord Vharr, earning a frightened scream from Fong Zarr as the mongoose in the purple dress now physically terrified him. Matilda flipped her hair to one side and glared at Lord Vharr with her beautiful eyes. Bladefeather and Mushu leaped down from the window and landed behind her. Sora and Joel stayed put seeing as they would be of no help to a kung-fu master fighting a horde of ninjas. All the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas stopped pushing cannons around and they stared up at the balcony above them where the kung-fu warriors were staring down Lord Vharr and Fong Zarr.

"Matilda?" blurted Lord Vharr "Impossible! We imprisoned you! How did you manage to escape?"

"Let's just say it isn't wise to make your guards stand so close to me." said Matilda coldly "Lord Vharr, you and I are going to have a showdown. A showdown to determine the fate of my dad. If I win, you and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan have to stay away from Chun-Nan forever."

"If I win, I get your head as a trophy and I get to proceed with my assassination attempt." boomed Lord Vharr "Well, since you've asked for it child, I'll be happy to oblige. I could do with the exercise."

"I'm more then exercise you heartless devil." said Matilda slowly.

She then screamed a very loud battle cry and charged towards Lord Vharr. The suited warrior unsheathed his wrist mounted blades,

forcing Matilda to stop dead in her tracks and bend over backwards as Lord Vharr tried to slice her in half with one hefty swipe of the sword. Lord Vharr then swiped again at Matilda, forcing her backwards to avoid the deadly sword blade. Fong Zarr drew out a pair of katanas, which again, were spares to replace his broken ones, and he tried to interfere with the battle but Bladefeather punched him away, sending him flying off the balcony and straight into one of the massive cannons, knocking it over onto its side in the process.

"Yīnyǐng Mao scum, they can't apply to the rules can they?" muttered Bladefeather, swooping down after Fong Zarr.

Mushu jumped down after him. Fong Zarr picked himself up and he pointed his katanas at Bladefeather. The whole Yīnyǐng Mao clan drew out their weapons and prepared to fight Bladefeather and Mushu. Bladefeather and Mushu didn't show any signs of fear as the ninja cats surrounded them all, brandishing katanas, nunchakus, staffs, spears and all kinds of weapons. The ninja cats all leaped towards Bladefeather and Mushu but the two charge forward and ploughed through all the leaping ninjas. The ninjas were sent flying everywhere and they all crashed into either the walls or the floor. Mushu used his tail-whipping attacks and kung-fu skills while Bladefeather threw daggers everywhere, not caring if he hit any of the ninjas at all. Most of the ninjas got stricken and killed by the daggers whereas other managed to dodge the deadly weapons as Bladefeather threw them everywhere. Fong Zarr leaped into the fray and sliced Bladefeather's daggers to pieces with his katanas. Bladefeather stopped throwing the daggers and instead, held two of them and had a sword fight with Fong Zarr. They clashed weapons, the loud ringing of clanging steel droning in their ears as their weapons met each other, and they both tried to slash at each other. Daggers and katanas clashed against each other, making sparks fly and the two warrior tried to get the best of one another. Any surviving ninjas tried to help Fong Zarr but Mushu fought them all off, leaving Fong Zarr and Bladefeather to fight each other and each other only.

Up on the balcony, Lord Vharr and Matilda's match seemed more like a game of cat and mouse with Matilda being unfortunate enough

to be the mouse and Lord Vharr being a very deadly cat as he kept swinging his wrist-swords at Matilda and trying to slice her in half. Lord Vharr swung but Matilda dodged the attack by jumping into the air and before she landed back down, she kicked Lord Vharr in the head. Lord Vharr staggered to one side and Matilda punched the lord's helmet as hard as she could. Lord Vharr swiped at Matilda with his sword but Matilda ducked and retaliated with an uppercut. Lord Vharr kneed Matilda in the gut and then elbowed her in the back at the same time, leaving Matilda very winded and very sore. The princess collapsed onto the floor and Lord Vharr kicked her away. Matilda rolled across the balcony and she groaned in pain. Lord Vharr advanced on her with his wrist-blades ready to cleave her in two but the mongoose managed to pick herself up and she kicked Lord Vharr in the gut. Lord Vharr tried to stab Matilda but Matilda grabbed his arm and swung him over onto his back. Lord Vharr picked himself up and kicked Matilda in the thigh. Then Lord Vharr swung at Matilda and slashed her across the arm. Matilda screamed in pain and she clutched her throbbing arm with had a very large cut on it. Lord Vharr then sized the opportunity to try and behead Matilda but Matilda back flipped away from him, causing him to miss. Lord Vharr sheathed his swords, seeing as he just couldn't hit Matilda with them, and decided to use his bare hands this time. Matilda punched Lord Vharr with her sore arm, the punch being much weaker since that arm was injured, and Lord Vharr punched her back. He then punched her in the face, then in the gut and then in the nose, the punches getting harder after each one. Matilda punched with her good arm but Lord Vharr caught her fist in his hand and threw her arm to one side, causing her to stagger. Lord Vharr then upper-kicked Matilda in the chin, sending her hurling backwards into the wall. Matilda crashed into the wall and groaned like a ghoul. Lord Vharr was a lot tougher then she dared to have imagined. Lord Vharr advanced on Matilda with his wrist-swords deployed. Matilda stared in horror at the suited figure. He was going to kill her now. The mongoose princess sat against the wall in fear with no way of escaping this time. Lord Vharr raised his arm and cackled at Matilda.

"Good skill for someone who's in between the master and expert stage of kung-fu." he sneered "I however am already at the expert stage of kung-fu! No matter how hard you fight, I will come out the

victor for I am at the highest stage of kung-fu! You aren't there yet!"

"How do…you know that?" coughed Matilda.

"I can tell by your fighting style." said Lord Vharr "Now, say your prayers for the eternal darkness has come to claim you child!"

Matilda stared up at the wrist mounted swords as Lord Vharr prepared to slice her head off. Lord Vharr swung down at Matilda and…Matilda caught the blade in her hands. Lord Vharr gasped in surprise as Matilda sat against the wall with his blade sandwiched between her hands. Matilda then glared at Lord Vharr.

"I will never fall by the blade." she said.

She then got back up to her feet with her hands still holding Lord Vharr's sword. Lord Vharr tried to wrench his sword out of Matilda's grasp but her grasp was too tough for him. Matilda then proceeded to snap the blade in two and throw the tip at Lord Vharr. Lord Vharr smacked it away and roared at her.

"If I can't kill you with my blades, then maybe you'll fall by the mighty cannon!" he snarled.

He then leaped to the left side, causing Matilda to turn around, wondering what he was leaping onto and to her horror, a huge dragon-head shaped cannon was pointing directly at her! Lord Vharr landed behind it and quickly pulled the rope on the back. Matilda turned around and ran for it just as Lord Vharr pulled the rope. The cannon fired and a searing hot fireball hurtled towards Matilda. Matilda spotted a shield lying by and she quickly picked it up. She turned around and held the shield up in front of her face just as the cannon blast caught up with her. She was hit by the blast and was sent hurling backwards into the wall. Bladefeather heard the cannon blast and saw Matilda flying into the wall. The cannon blast blew Matilda straight through the wall and she was sent hurling through the air and far into the distance. Bladefeather flew up to the balcony and swooped over to the hole in the wall. He watched as the cannon blast and Matilda disappeared into the distance…

OMFG! Is Matilda dead? Blooming looks like it! How can the Yīnyǐng Mao clan be defeated now? Stay tuned for the exciting finale to this epic saga! Reviews are welcome.

The Five Festivals of ChunNan 4

Arc 6: The Five Festivals of Chun-Nan

Part 4

"NO!" screamed Bladefeather the Falcon as he watched the cannon blast disappear into the distance along with Princess Matilda.

The falcon couldn't believe what he was seeing. Lord Vharr, the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's master, had shot Matilda with a cannon and now she was being hurled hundreds of feet out into the distance! There was no way Matilda could possibly be alive after that incredible blast. Matilda was dead, just like her poor father was going to be tonight once the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's plan went into motion. Bladefeather could feel his heart tearing in two as the very thought of Matilda dead surged up his veins like an electrical current. His eyes began to brim with tears. Bladefeather seldom cried over anything but Matilda was his love interest and now he'd lost her forever before they even had time to get better acquainted. Bladefeather fell down on his knees and the tears he tried to hold back trickled from his eyes and down his beak. Mushu leaped onto the balcony and ran up to Bladefeather, feeling sorry for his friend. He knew that Bladefeather loved Matilda and now she was dead, Bladefeather wouldn't be able to see her again and Mushu knew what Bladefeather was feeling like at the moment. As for Lord Vharr, he just cackled at the top of his voice.

"YES!" he bellowed "I KILLED PRINCESS MATILDA! NOW NOTHING CAN STOP ME FROM BECOMING EMPEROR OF CHUN-NAN!"

His loud, ominous cackle echoed through the room like a singing choir. Fong Zarr and his ninjas caught the news from Lord Vharr's gloating and they all did a chorus of evil grins and evil cackles. Mushu turned around and glared at Lord Vharr, who was still cackling. The iguana ran up to Lord Vharr and socked the suited kung-fu expert right in the face. Lord Vharr's laughter quickly

changed to a cry of surprised as he suddenly found himself hurling away from the cannon he had just used to kill Matilda and he hurtled into the wall. He left a large dent shaped like himself in the wall. Mushu then kicked the cannon and sent it trundling towards Lord Vharr. Lord Vharr just held his feet up and stopped the cannon from squashing him against the wall. Mushu then ran over to the grieving Bladefeather and he patted him on the back. Bladefeather looked at Mushu and the iguana signed to him "Let's get out of here." with his hands.

"Yes, I think it's time we removed ourselves from the scene." said Bladefeather, wiping his eyes dry "I cannot stay in same room with the fiends who killed my blossom flower."

He flapped his wings and he flew out of the hole the cannon blast had made into the wall. Mushu jumped after him and he climbed down the temple walls. Sora Sumdac and Joel Nutmeg, two budding spies who were helping Matilda, climbed down with a grappling hook Sora had in one of her gadget orbs. The spies and Mushu both reached the ground and they ran after Bladefeather who just flew through the skies, desperate to get away from the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple. Fong Zarr watched through the hole in the wall as the kung-fu masters and spies fled the scene and ran off into the distance. Fong Zarr stamped his foot and cursed himself.

"Damn it!" he growled "They've escaped! Now they'll warn the emperor of what's going on and he'll be all the wiser about our plans!"

"Their escape is a minor bump in the tarmac." said Lord Vharr casually "A bump that can easily be flattened. Who cares if they tell the emperor about us? They can't beat me! I'm at the expert stage! They're only at the master stage so I will overpower them easily! And Tai can't stand to me so he's no threat!"

"So the plan will continue as scheduled?" asked Fong Zarr.

"Yes." said Lord Vharr wickedly "We shall still terminate the emperor tonight. Provided the news of Matilda's death doesn't kill Tai for us that is." he added in a sadistic tone.

The two villains then began to laugh in unison. Matilda was dead and her dead would soon be joining her.

Meanwhile, Bladefeather, Mushu and the spies had arrived at the bamboo forest that led to the Pagoda of Prosperity and they all stopped for a rest. Bladefeather settled down and began clutching his chest while trying not to cry again.

"No…No…" he choked "My…my elegant princes…can't be…dead!"

"What happened?" asked Sora "Did Matilda get hit by that cannon blast we saw?"

"Yes." said Bladefeather as a big fat tear trickled down his cheek "The cannon-blast struck Matilda and bust its way through the wall. It hurtled into the distance with her. Where she's landed is anybody's guess but a blast like that has most likely executed her!"

"So Lord Vharr's killed Matilda?" asked Sora "Oh no! What's Emperor Tai going to say about all this?"

"He'll die of a broken heart if we have the dishonour of apprising this piece of horrific news to him!" wailed Bladefeather "Matilda was the whole world to him and now she's gone to join her mother in the afterlife! The emperor will not be able to stomach the horrors of this very news we will have to apprise him with!"

Mushu just looked sadly at the ground, feeling Bladefeather's emotions.

"Matilda maybe gone but we can't let her death be in vain." said Joel "We need to save the emperor from sharing her fate. We need to stop the Yīnyǐng Mao clan from crowning Lord Vharr emperor."

"I know we must." said Bladefeather, wiping his eyes dry again "It's just, I don't think I can carry on with this wound in my heart that will curse me with eternal pain and eternal misery. I loved Matilda, loved her ever since I first met her. And now…she's gone…forever…never to…be seen again!"

This piece of news startled Sora and Joel. They had not expected a princess like Matilda to be the apple of a kung-fu master's eye.

"You…you loved Matilda?" said Sora sympathetically.

"Yes…yes I did." said Bladefeather sadly "Not like you mendicants care since you're too young to comprehend the meaning and concept of love."

"Humph!" fumed Sora "I maybe only twelve years old but I do know what love is Bladefeather! I can tell the pain you're feeling now! I've had a heartache myself so don't treat me as if I don't know anything!"

"You've had a heartache?" said Bladefeather "Did you love somebody?"

"No but when I was a little girl, my parents had to give me up because they could only afford to look after one child." said Sora sadly "They were stricken with money troubles and because the other child, who is my brother, was younger he needed their care more then I did so I had to be put into an orphanage. I was then adopted by a super spy who worked for the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit, the very organization I work for and he trained me into being a super spy. He was tragically killed while on a mission but I don't let his death bring me down. I press on, knowing he still lives in me and that the only thing to do now is to leave the past behind and look on to the future."

"Are you suggesting I move on and forget about Matilda?" asked Bladefeather crossly "Well, I'm not doing such a dis-honouree thing like that!"

"No Bladefeather, I'm saying you can't let Matilda's death consume you." said Sora softly "Do you think Matilda would want you to sit and grieve about her for the rest of your life?"

"No, she would want met to continue defending Chun-Nan and honouring the people." said Bladefeather, realizing what Sora meant "In that case, I will continue to do so, in her name! I will save the emperor, for Matilda! And I will make the Yīnyǐng Mao clan pay for

this unrighteous, repugnant and pernicious act of theirs! Thank you for bringing me to my senses little one. Maybe children aren't such mendicants after all."

"You're welcome." said Sora "Now, are we going to save the emperor?"

"Do you even need to ask such a fatuous question?" joked Bladefeather "Let's go! The fate of the emperor is in our hands now!"

And with that, the two kung-fu masters and two spies got up to their feet and they all ran for it into the bamboo forest. They were going to warn Tai of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's plot and they were going to stop them from killing Tai. They had to be fast though. The evening was approaching and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's plan would soon be in motion…

Princess Matilda, by sheer luck, was not dead like Bladefeather and the others thought. The princess was alive! Alive but badly hurt. VERY badly hurt. The mongoose princess by sheer luck had managed to survive the cannon blast. The shield she had picked up helped but she was still lucky to be alive. She had landed in the middle of the local village and Master Gāng Émáo bǐ, Bladefeather and Mushu's mentor, had found her lying on the ground with heavy burn marks on her body. The kung-fu porcupine had scooped Matilda up and taken her to his temple so she could heal from her injures. He had wrapped her torso up in bandages as well as her forearms and legs and right now, Matilda was lying on a bed, unconscious but alive. Master Gāng tended to her wounds and dabbed her forehead with water to cool her off a little and ease her pains a little. All he could wonder was what on Mobius had happened to poor Matilda and he was determined to find out. But right now, Matilda needed medical care so he had to watch over her. As he softly stroked her hand to comfort her, he began talking to himself.

"My, my dear Matilda." he gently said to the sleeping mongoose "What happened to you? You look like you've been in an unfortunate confrontation with a raging fire. Your burn marks seem to hint that

heavily. And to think you knew better then to play with fire."

Then suddenly, Matilda began to stir very weakly in the bed. Master Gāng could feel Matilda's hand tremble in his hands as she began to stir. The princess took her hand out of Master Gāng's and she lay it down beside her. She then tensed up briefly and then opened her eyes very slowly. She moaned gloomily and she looked around sleepily while still lying down.

"Hrrum…mmm…huh?" she mumbled "Where? Where…am I?"

She sat up and then felt a large surge of pain up her back. She tensed up and quickly lay back down.

"Easy there child, you're hurt." said Master Gāng gently "Sssh, Sssh, Sssh, take it easy, you'll take some time to recover."

Matilda looked at Master Gāng and was surprised to see the porcupine with the steel quills by her bedside.

"Master Gāng?" she blurted and then coughed heavily "Where…am I? How did I…"

"Get here?" finished Master Gāng "I found you lying around and I noticed you were grievously injured to I quickly took you in and tended to your wounds. You're seriously hurt right now sweetheart, what happened to you?"

"I was…at the Yīnyǐng Mao…clan's temple." said Matilda weakly "I was fighting them…and then their…master Lord Vharr…shot a cannon at me…I managed to shield myself but the blast still…did a number on me…"

"Aaaah, a cannon blast was it?" said Master Gāng "Horrible! Those things can kill! Why were you at the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple anyway child?"

"Two spies met me…Urgh!...and they revealed to me the… Yīnyǐng Mao clan are behind the recent…festival folly that's…been happening."

"This news does not surprise me at all Matilda." said Master Gāng

"The Yīnyǐng Mao clan are mere thieves and ninja warriors after all. They were bound to be the ones pillaging the festivals. And yet we never managed to work that out."

"I know." said Matilda "But that's…Nugh!...not all! The Yīnyǐng Mao clan are plotting…to kill…my dad! They want to place…Lord Vharr as emperor of…Chun-Nan!"

Master Gāng's eyes widened but he didn't show much signs of horror or shock.

"They're not!" he blurted "Tell me they're not!"

"They are…" said Matilda, rubbing her sides better "They don't like…daddy so they…want to replace him…with Lord Vharr…I tried to stop them…but Lord Vharr…shot me with a cannon…and blew me…away. Hopefully Bladefeather, Mushu and the spies can warn my daddy in time."

"I will go and warn him." said Master Gāng kindly "I am the nearest one here after all. You stay in the bed and wait for me like a good girl Matilda. I will go and find Emperor Tai and warn him of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's assassination attempt."

And with that, Master Gāng left Matilda's bedside and he walked out of his temple, leaving Matilda alone in the bedroom. Matilda slowly pushed herself up into a sitting position and she observed her bandaged arms and torso. Her arms were hurting as much as her torso. She then felt her bandaged legs which were hidden by the quilt covers she had on her. She lay back on the bed and fumed to herself.

"I can't possibly save my dad now." she grumbled "I'm too… ugh!...injured and weak. Lord Vharr would snap me in two if I dared to show my face to him again. Bladefeather and…Mushu won't be able to beat him…Lord Vharr's at the expert stage of kung-fu…I'm the only one who has a chance…and I'm in no condition to fight."

She sighed loudly as she stared up at the ceiling while lying down on the bed.

"I wish I didn't get hit by that cannon." she moaned "Then I wouldn't be in this condition right now. I hope I recover soon so I can get back on my feet and defeat those insidious ninjas."

Then suddenly, much to Matilda's surprise, Master Gāng returned to his temple. He had only been gone for a minute and he was already back. His face looked grave. Matilda read Master Gāng's face and instantly picked up that what he had to say wasn't good news.

"Matilda, the emperor's not at the Pagoda of Prosperity!" he cried "He left a note on the door saying he was meeting the governors and he won't be back until tonight."

"We can't wait until tonight, that's when the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's executing their plan!" shrieked Matilda "We have to warn him now!"

"I'm sorry child but I cannot do that." said Master Gāng grimly "It is forbidden for anybody to disturb the governors so I will not be allowed to go in and interrupt them."

"Then we'll just have to hope…that we can warn him before the Yīnyǐng Mao clan puts their plan into action." said Matilda tiredly.

Unfortunately, that was not going to be possible for the evening was just seconds away now…

It was dark by the time Bladefeather, Mushu and the spies arrived at the Pagoda of Prosperity. Upon arrival, Bladefeather immediately ran over to the door and he was about to knock onto it until he saw the note on the door that Master Gāng had seen earlier. Bladefeather ripped the note off the door and quick read it. Despite it being dark, Bladefeather had keen night vision so he could read quite clearly in the dark.

"If anybody is reading this, I am at the Council Temple, discussing secret matters with the governors and I will not be back until tonight." read Bladefeather "Anybody wanting to see me will have to be patient please. Emperor Dalon Tai."

"He's away and he won't be back until tonight?" gasped Sora "But it

is tonight right now! And tonight is when the Yīnyǐng Mao are going to kill him!"

"I know." said Bladefeather "It's serendipitous that I happen to know where the Council Temple is. Outside folk are forbidden entry into the temple so we will have to wait outside for him. And seeing as night has fallen, chances are he won't be in the temple for much longer."

"Then we'd best get there as quick as possible." said Joel "Bladefeather, lead the way."

Bladefeather flapped his wings and took flight once again. He swooped down the hilltop the pagoda was perched on and he headed to the local village, which was still under repairs from the Festival of the Running Water disaster*. The Council Temple was beyond the local village and located squarely in the secondary village where the Festival of the Breezing Winds had to be held due to the local village being in ruins. Mushu and the spies followed Bladefeather as fast as they possibly could. They had to get to the temple as fast as possible. Even though night had fallen, they had no idea when the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was going to execute the plan so they had to warn Tai at the first available opportunity or they would be too late…

…and too late they were! Somehow, Lord Vharr knew where Tai was right now and he had the Yīnyǐng Mao clan set up their cannons on rooftops of buildings that surrounded the Council Temple. The Council Temple was a grand looking temple, easily fit for a government meeting and housing with its gold trimmed roofs and walls and grand looking windows. Fong Zarr and Lord Vharr had set up one cannon so that it was pointing directly at the gates to the temple. The moment Tai walked through those gates, they would pull the trigger and Tai would be blasted in a matter of seconds, not suspecting a thing and not being ready for it. It was the perfect chance and they had to take it now. Fong Zarr adjusted the cannon a little to make sure that the cannon blast would hit the gates as planned. They had to be perfectly on target or the whole thing could go belly up for them. The cannon was adjusted and Lord Vharr

grabbed the rope at the back of the cannon. One pull of the rope and the cannon would fire.

"Can you believe our luck Fong Zarr?" cackled Lord Vharr "We're all set up and ready and Emperor Tai will have no idea on what's going to happen to him!"

"I can't believe it either Lord Vharr." said Fong Zarr wickedly "Oh I'm trembling with excitement now! Tai's rrreign is about to end!"

"Indeed it is Fong Zarr." purred Lord Vharr "And my reign is about to begin. If no one will respect me as emperor, well, I have plans for those who defy me. Grisly plans that is."

Then suddenly, Lord Vharr spotted something. He could see Emperor Tai coming out of the Council Temple and heading to the gates. This was it! The killing could commence! Lord Vharr kept a firm grip on the rope and prepared to pull it. As for Tai, as he wondered up to the gates, he was talking to himself about something.

"At least the governors weren't too disappointed about the last two festivals being postponed." he said to himself "I wonder why Governor Shen wasn't here? Maybe he has other things on his mind right now."

Tai came up to the gates and he opened them. He walked through the gates and he closed them. Lord Vharr pulled the rope and the cannon fired a huge fireball straight towards Emperor Tai! Tai heard the fireball coming but he was much too late to try and dodge it. His life flashed before his eyes as he watched the fireball that was about to claim his life hurtle towards him. Before the fireball could strike him, Bladefeather swooped onto the scene in the nick of time and he pulled Tai out of the way by grabbing his robe with his talons. The fireball struck the gates and blew them clean out of their sockets, sending the scorched wood of the gates hurling towards the temple. Lord Vharr saw what had happened and he instantly got mad by the fact his assassination attempt just got foiled by Bladefeather.

"Curse that filthy, stinking falcon!" he roared.

"If only we'd captured him instead of letting him get away master!" moaned Fong Zarr "This wouldn't have happened otherwise!"

"Well it appears I will have to kill that stupid emperor myself then!" growled Lord Vharr, deploying his wrist-swords, one of them being a new one to replace the one Matilda had broken earlier "Be on standby Fong Zarr and await my command!"

Lord Vharr leaped off of the building and he landed on the ground below, leaving a small crater in it as he landed. Lord Vharr saw Tai and Bladefeather lying on the ground just inches away from the impact zone and he charged up to them with his blades held high. But before he could even reach the two, Mushu appeared from nowhere and he tackled Lord Vharr from the side. Lord Vharr hurtled into a building and left a heavy imprint of himself in the wall. He pulled himself out of the wall and he swiped his swords at Mushu. Mushu dodged the sword swipes and he head-butted Lord Vharr in the torso. Lord Vharr dropkicked Mushu and slashed him across the snout. Mushu gripped his snout and he tensed up in pain, seeing as how due to his damaged voice-box, he couldn't scream in pain like any normal person would. Lord Vharr then proceeded to sheath his weapons and give Mushu an uppercut harder then even the ones Zira could land on him. Mushu hurtled through the air in a perfect rainbow arch and he landed painfully on his back. Lord Vharr deployed his blades and he prepared to cleave Mushu into pieces. Then suddenly, a red laser shot out from nowhere and sliced Lord Vharr's blades in two! Sora and Joel had arrived onto the scene at last and Joel had used the built in laser in his orb-cam eye to slice Lord Vharr's weapons in two. Lord Vharr's first response was to leap into the air and spiral towards the spies like a drill-bit. Sora and Joel dodged the attack but Lord Vharr landed back on his feet and he charged back towards Sora and Joel. He gave them both and uppercut each and the spies found themselves crashing into the same building Mushu had just crashed into. Mushu picked himself up and he pounced onto Lord Vharr, trying his hardest to wrestle the suited-warrior down and pin him to the ground.

As for Bladefeather, he helped Tai to get back onto his feet. The emperor looked very shaken and clearly horrified. He couldn't stop shivering in horror.

"Are you alright emperor?" asked Bladefeather.

"I…I…I am now…you saved…me…" gasped Emperor Tai "What… was that?"

"The Yīnyǐng Mao clan has taken it upon themselves to try and execute you emperor." explained Bladefeather "They wish to replace you with that boorish, unrighteous fiend Lord Vharr over there."

He pointed to Lord Vharr, the warrior fending off Mushu, Sora and Joel. Tai looked like he was about to faint.

"The Yīnyǐng Mao clan wants to kill me and replace me with him?" blurted Tai "I should have suspected they would do something like that since they're the ones that have been sabotaging the festivals!"

"I know." said Bladefeather "Do not fret though emperor, me and Mushu will make sure Lord Vharr falls to us."

Bladefeather drew out a pair of daggers and charged up to Lord Vharr. He leaped towards the kung-fu expert, did a twirl in mid-air and slashed at him with the daggers. Lord Vharr just promptly turned around and walloped Bladefeather in the face with one powerful punch. Bladefeather hurtled into the ground beak first and he skidded to a painful halt. Lord Vharr then proceeded to kick the downed falcon and send him rolling across the ground. Bladefeather picked himself up only to get a sucker punch to the beak and get sent staggering backwards. Fong Zarr turned the cannon around and pointed it at Bladefeather.

"This is for getting in our way!" he yelled, pulling the rope.

The cannon fired but Bladefeather dodged the cannon blast before it could hit him. Fong Zarr fired again but Bladefeather dodged and the fireball hit a house, blowing a hole in the wall and terrifying the innocent occupant inside. He immediately abandoned his home and ran for it seeing as he was not safe here. Bladefeather flew to one side and Fong Zarr fired at him again. The fireball missed Bladefeather and hit the ground. The fireball hit the ground just a few feet away from Master Gāng's temple and Matilda heard the cannon blast as clear as daylight. She shot up into a sitting position

and she listened out for more cannon blasts. Fong Zarr fired again and missed Bladefeather once again as the falcon dodged the attack. Matilda's heart leapt in horror.

"Cannons!" she shrieked "The assassination attempt has begun!"

"I will go and fend of those Yīnyǐng Mao vermin!" said Master Gāng "You stay here Matilda; you're not fit to fight."

"But…" protested Matilda.

Master Gāng just turned around and run out of the temple, ready to face of the attackers. Matilda was left alone in the bedroom once again. As injured as she was, she really didn't want to just lie around and be useless, she wanted to save her dad. She loved her dad and even though he yelled at her for something she didn't do last night, Matilda was still willing to risk her life for his. Matilda decided that despite her injuries, she was going to save her dad, even if she died trying. Matilda flung the bedcovers back and she sat up in the bed. She climbed out of the bed, got to her feet…and fell over onto her knees. Her legs weren't willing to work with her right now. Matilda grimaced and tried to fight the pain her legs were feeling. Using strength that she didn't know she had, she managed to push herself back onto her feet.

"I will not let my wounds bring me down." said Matilda determinedly "I will fight the pain just like I will fight my enemies."

Matilda's determination to save her dad was giving her some new strength, strength she really needed right now. Matilda was so determined to save her dad, she didn't even feel like she had been hurt at all. She removed the bandages around her waist, arms and legs and left them to drop onto the floor. Matilda then proceeded to stagger out of the bedroom and then straight out of Master Gāng's temple. She left the temple and headed towards the fight, which she could hear a good distance away.

As for the fight, Lord Vharr was completely on top of this one. Bladefeather and Mushu could hardly lay a finger on the kung-fu expert. He was more powerful then even Zira the Ruthless and Zira was bad enough against them so they had no chance. Sora and

Joel couldn't even get near Lord Vharr being as how they didn't even know kung-fu and only a kung-fu warrior could defeat another kung-fu warrior so they were of no help at all. Lord Vharr just simply threw them to the side when they attacked. Fong Zarr had been ordered to stop using the cannon because he kept missing so he just remained on the rooftop and waited for an order. Master Gāng arrived onto the scene and he joined in with his kung-fu skills. The kung-fu porcupine maybe old but his power was still incredible. Master Gāng threw several of his trademark steel quills at Lord Vharr. Lord Vharr's suit would protect him from the quills but only a little. Lord Vharr retaliated by plucking all the fired quills out of his suit and throwing them back at Master Gāng. The kung-fu porcupine deflected them all with quick hand actions but the quills were only a distraction. Lord Vharr punched Master Gāng in the face so hard, the porcupine felt like his jaw had been broken. The porcupine fell onto his hands and knees and Lord Vharr was about to grab him until he raised his quills to keep him away. Master Gāng drew a long quill from his back and he wielded it like a sword. He slashed at Lord Vharr but he missed and Lord Vharr kicked him in the gut. Master Gāng gave Lord Vharr and uppercut and then a roundhouse kick to the legs. Lord Vharr found himself falling onto his back. Master Gāng then proceeded to try and stab Lord Vharr with the quill but Lord Vharr rolled out of his way, causing Master Gāng to miss and plunge the quill into the ground instead. Lord Vharr jumped back onto his feet and he slugged Master Gāng while he was trying to pull his quill out of the ground. Master Gāng skidded across the ground and lay on his side. Lord Vharr yanked the quill out of the ground and advanced on the porcupine. He was going to kill Master Gāng with his own weapon. Bladefeather attempted to save Master Gāng by throwing a dagger at Lord Vharr. Lord Vharr just caught the dagger in his finger tips and threw it over his shoulder. Mushu tried to attack Lord Vharr but Lord Vharr slashed him with the quill, causing him to stop and clutch himself. Lord Vharr grabbed Mushu's tail and he threw him away. Mushu landed on top of Bladefeather and knocked the falcon over. Lord Vharr stood over Master Gāng and was about to plunge the quill into the porcupine's back until something appeared from behind and walloped him in the head with one powerful punch. Lord Vharr fell onto his knees and his helmet fell off. Master Gāng picked himself up and stared in surprise at who Lord Vharr's attacker was. Bladefeather, Mushu and the spies were gobsmacked at what they

were seeing. It was Princess Matilda, standing there with a very brave and very determined look on her face and looking very much alive. Bladefeather was so overcome with glee he thought he would faint.

"Matilda!" he cried "Oh praise the ancestors! You survived the cannon blast!"

"Yes I did." said Matilda "But barely. The shield I picked up saved my life and Master Gāng tended to my wounds."

"I must say, you recovered a lot faster then I thought you would." said Master Gāng "Your injuries obviously went as bad as I thought they were."

"I think my determination to save my dad brought me new strength." said Matilda "Because the more I willed to save dad, the less pain I felt of my injuries. Where is daddy anyway?"

"Hiding and safely out of harm's way." said Bladefeather with a smile on his beak.

"That's good." said Matilda "Now let's finish Lord Vharr off once and for all!"

Matilda strode up to Lord Vharr, who was on his hands and knees rubbing his throbbing face and she grabbed Lord Vharr by the scruff of his battle suit. She hoisted him up to his feet and noticed that Lord Vharr didn't have his helmet on, revealing what he really looked like under that suit. To everybody except Sora and Joel's horror, the face looked very familiar to them. He looked just like…Matilda was so shocked, she let go of Lord Vharr and he fell onto his bottom.

"Governor Shen?" she shrieked at the top of her voice.

Shen quickly felt his face and realized his helmet had fallen off so now his identity had been revealed. He fumed at himself and he got back onto his feet. Bladefeather and Mushu's jaws dropped in unison.

"G-g-g-Governor Shen?" stammered Bladefeather "You're Lord Vharr?"

"Yes, yes I am worms!" snarled Shen "What of it?"

Even Fong Zarr was shocked at this.

"My master's a governor?" he blurted "Well that was unexpected!"

"Wh-wh-why are you trying to kill my dad Shen?" stammered Matilda "Why have you b-b-betrayed everybody?"

"I have not betrayed anybody!" retorted Shen, smacking Matilda in the face and knocking her over "I am doing this for my country and my people!"

"How exactly is executing Emperor Tai not betraying anybody?" snapped Bladefeather.

"I am getting rid of Matilda's oaf of a father because he is an abysmal emperor who is a poor excuse for my successor!" bellowed Shen "Ever since I stepped down from the emperor role twenty years ago, Tai has shamed us all!"

"No he hasn't!" yelled Matilda, rubbing her throbbing cheek "He's brought honour and prosperity to this country!"

"So blinded by loyalty you are you little brat!" snapped Shen "Tai has taken away what glory and power we once had! Chun-Nan is no longer prideful and powerful, it is a festering pile of peace with no sense of honour, valour or spirit whatsoever! The people of Chun-Nan were once powerful, honouree people willing to do what it took to defend the country but now, they crave peace and the spirit of kung-fu is diminishing! Only few people these days know kung-fu and it's because of your father toning us all down for his pathetic, peace loving needs! Your father is a disgrace to Chun-Nan Matilda, pity you're too blinded by loyalty to see that!"

Matilda's eyes filled with tears at what Shen had just said about Emperor Tai. Shen's words were like knives plunging into her back, very hurtful and very painful.

"You're wrong!" sobbed Matilda "Dad hasn't taken any of our spirit away! He's improved our lifestyle and the people of Chun-Nan are happy with his reign! If you take my daddy away, it won't be me who

will be wounded by the affair!"

"I don't care what the vulgar and flaccid minded think!" snapped Shen "They chose to weaken themselves when they decided to go with Tai's laws so they can either serve me or perish! Once I kill your pathetic father and you Matilda, I will take back my throne and lead Chun-Nan back to it's former glory!"

"No you won't!" snapped Bladefeather "You know well enough that an emperor's time on the throne is not everlasting! Your time was up twenty years ago Shen when the public demanded another emperor after disliking your ambitions! You can't just take the throne back! Especially as nobody liked you to begin with!"

"Exactly!" snapped Shen "Which is why I disguised myself and put on a fake name, to lead people under the pretence that I am really a suited warrior named Lord Vharr! Once Tai and Matilda are dead, the people will scream for a new emperor and I, under my alias, will become the new emperor and I will improve Chun-Nan's failing lifestyle and save kung-fu from extinction!"

"No you won't!" screamed Matilda, shocking Shen in the face and knocking him over "My dad will continue his reign until his time is up and then I will take his place as Empress Matilda and live on in my father's name!"

"That makes you as flaccid as Tai Matilda!" snarled Shen, kangaroo kicking Matilda in the stomach and sending her flying into a wall "Which is why I must kill you as well as Tai! I almost succeeded already so I will not fail this time!"

"Wait a minute." said Sora quickly "Before you and Matilda unleash hell on each other, can you tell us how Fong Zarr and his cronies fit into your plan?"

"They were just cannon fodder!" sneered Shen "I needed them to help me in my plans to overthrow Tai! Once I succeed, they'll be obsolete to me and they can go back to living as outsiders like they should do!"

Fong Zarr looked like someone had just shot an arrow into his

throat.

"You…you lied to me?" shrieked Fong Zarr "You weren't planning on giving the Yīnyǐng Mao clan the glory it deserves? You were just using me for your own personal gain this whole time?"

"Yes I was Fong Zarr!" shouted Shen "And I have no regrets! You time is up now Fong Zarr!"

He then proceeded to pick up the quill that Master Gāng had tried to use on him earlier and he threw it at Fong Zarr. The quill struck Fong Zarr in the chest and the clan leader collapsed beside the cannon, seemingly dead after that attack. Shen turned around to Matilda who had just pulled herself out of the wall and had bent down in a battle ready stance. Shen bent down in a battle ready stance too.

"So it appears you wish to fight Matilda." sneered Shen "Good, at least you'll die with honour."

"I will win with honour." said Matilda coldly "And I will make sure you do plenty of time for your crimes."

Matilda roared at the top of her voice and she charged towards Shen. She leaped into the air and twirled towards Shen. Shen charged to Matilda and then jumped up just as Matilda sailed overhead. Matilda found herself flying into the air and she landed back down with a heavy crash that caused the pain in her back to return and flood up her back. Matilda grimaced and she rubbed herself. Shen then came hurtling down and was about to pile-dive Matilda into a pulp but the mongoose princess moved out of the way just in time, causing Shen to land on the ground and cause a heavy force impact. Matilda kangaroo kicked Shen in the gut and sent him staggering. She then leaped onto her feet and tried to punch Shen in the face but Shen blocked her punch with his hand. Matilda rapidly punched at Shen but Shen effortlessly blocked all her punches as she threw them with his bare hands. Matilda tried a roundhouse kick to the head but Shen bent over backwards and dodged the kick. He then socked Matilda in the gut before she could even attempt to deliver another blow. Matilda punched again but Shen blocked the attack and he head butted Matilda in the forehead. Matilda grabbed

her throbbing head and tried to regain her senses in time but Shen took advantage of Matilda's situation and roundhouse punched her in the face. Matilda raised her leg, drew it back and let Shen have it straight in the face as hard as she possibly could. Shen staggered a little but he quickly regained his senses and cackled at Matilda.

"You're definitely a persistent little brat aren't you?" he sneered "Despite being stricken by a cannon blast, you can still fight on! Makes me feel sorry I have to kill you in order to get my rightful title back!"

"It is not your rightful title and you will never kill me Shen!" retorted Matilda.

With a loud battle cry, she rammed Shen in the chest with the side of her arm and then gave him an uppercut to the chin. Matilda elbowed Shen before he could recover and then she roundhouse punched him in the face, sending him flying backwards. Matilda panted and gasped for breath. Her injuries were still serious even though she was now up and at em and she was finding it hard to carry on. She was getting worn out. Shen sensed Matilda's failing stamina and he picked himself up and he charged at Matilda. He threw himself forward, landed on his hands, flipped himself over and kick-slammed Matilda in the face. Matilda fell onto her back but she wasn't down for long. Shen tried to stamp on her face but Matilda rolled out of the way and dodged the attack. Matilda kicked Shen in the ankle, tripping him up and bringing him down onto his side. Matilda stood up but Shen grabbed her leg and tripped her up, bringing the beautiful princess down on her back once again. Shen held onto Matilda's leg and held her in place but Matilda kicked him in the nose with her other leg. She wrenched her leg out of Shen's grasp and picked herself up. Shen picked himself up and punched at Matilda but Matilda blocked his attack. They then both drew their arms back and they punched at each other. They hit each other in the face and sent each other skidding backwards. Matilda, panting heavily, ran up to Shen, jumped into the air, flipped and landed a kick-slam on Shen's shoulder. The impact almost dislocated Shen's shoulder. Shen retaliated with an uppercut to the chin and he then punched Matilda in the shoulder. Matilda and Shen kicked at each other but they just hit each other's legs. Matilda lunged with a

powerful punch but Shen dodged the punch. He grabbed Matilda's arm, twisted it to make her yelp and then threw her over onto her back. Matilda grabbed Shen's arm before he could let go of her arm and she pulled him over onto his knees. Matilda picked herself up and kicked Shen before he could stand back up. Shen picked himself up and deployed his gliding apparatus in a pathetic attempt to scare Matilda. Matilda wasn't scared by Shen's gliding wings and she jumped over him. She grabbed Shen's wings and ripped them clean off his back. Shen turned around and pounded Matilda in the cheek before she could do anything with his broken wings. Matilda staggered backwards and tried to attack but Shen threw the material of the gliding apparatus into Matilda's face, distracting her a little. He then took off his shoulder cape and wrapped it around Matilda's head, blindfolding her in the process. Matilda couldn't see a thing now. Taking advantage of the situation, Shen punched Matilda in the face. He then proceeded to go to town on her by punching her repeatedly in the face and cheeks. He even proceeded to punch her in the nose, chin and belly! After the belly punch, he then roundhouse punched Matilda in the face and sent her skidding backwards. Matilda grabbed the cape around her head and tore it off of herself, giving her, her vision back. Too late for Shen ran up to Matilda and socked her directly above the bridge of her nose. Matilda staggered in pain and before she could retaliate, Shen gave her a massive uppercut that sent Matilda flying backwards into the air like a tossed rag doll. She landed with a heavy crash on the ground and she grimaced hard in pain. Her injuries from earlier were flaring up again and Shen's attacks were just rubbing salt onto her wounds. Matilda felt too weak to attack or even stand up now. Shen cackled at the top of his booming voice and he strode up to Matilda. Matilda could only watch helplessly as Shen advanced on her with a sick, twisted grin on his evil face. Matilda's eyes filled with tears. Not tears because she was crying, tears of fear and tears of defeat. She knew what was coming now. Shen was going to kill her and then kill Tai, leaving Chun-Nan without any royals and then he would take the throne the dis-honouree way and ruin her father's hard work. Shen stood proudly in front of Matilda and he glared down at her. He seized her by the neck, hoisted her up to his height and slammed her against the wall of a building. Matilda gasped hoarsely as the pain swept over her body.

"Thank you so much for the exercise child." taunted Shen "I feel refreshed and warmed up for when I take the throne to Chun-Nan. I'm sorry to do this but, you will die now. Don't feel too bad though, you'll die an honouree death Matilda."

"No…Shen…please…" begged Matilda hoarsely "Don't…kill me… please…I'll…do anything…anything! Please don't kill…me!"

"Do you really think I'm going to fall for that old trick?" cackled Shen "Well think again!"

He was about to snap Matilda's neck like a twig until a steel orb appeared from nowhere and struck him directly in the eye. Shen yelped in pain and he clutched his eyes. Matilda quickly head-butted him and pushed him away from her. She turned to her left and saw Sora standing there with a proud smile on her face. Sora had thrown the orb into Shen's eye and in turn, saved Matilda's life. Matilda beamed at the young fox.

"Thank you so much Sora." she said softly.

"Nothing to it." said Sora "Just doing what a good spy always does, saves lives while risking his or her own."

Shen picked himself up and he glared at Sora. He growled at her like an angry tiger.

"I'll squash you like a bug for that!" snarled Shen.

Matilda proceeded to uppercut Shen and send him falling onto his back.

"Get back Sora! I'll handle this!" she ordered.

"I don't mean to be rude or anything Matilda but I don't think you can." said Sora "Your injuries from the cannon blast haven't fully healed and you don't look like you can carry on."

"I'm fine Sora now get back!" yelled Matilda.

Sora did as she was told and she ran off before Shen could pick himself up. Shen got back to his feet and was about to sock Matilda

in the face until Bladefeather swooped into him and kick-slammed him onto his back. Matilda was surprised to see Bladefeather was helping her but she didn't mind, she and Bladefeather, kung-fu warriors in love, could now fight together and save Chun-Nan. Shen picked himself up but before he could do anything, Mushu appeared from behind and pounced on him. Mushu had tunnelled himself underground (he's the world's fastest and best digger) and he appeared behind Shen. Now he pinned Shen down to the ground, he forced Shen's arms behind his back and held him down. Bladefeather drew a dagger out and he pointed it at the traitor's face.

"You are refuted." he boasted "Now you subversive fiend, remain still while we restrain you and lock you up along with Zira the Ruthless."

"I am not defeated!" bellowed Shen "I am a kung-fu expert! You two are at the master stage and Matilda's somewhere in between! You'll never defeat me!"

Shen then proceeded to yank his arms out of Mushu's grasp and stand straight up, throwing Mushu off of his back and onto the ground. Bladefeather slashed Shen across the eye with his dagger and before Shen could recover, Matilda delivered a sucker punch to the jaw. Shen quickly recovered and he felt the now permanent scar he had across his eye. Bladefeather had clearly left his mark, a very painful mark. Shen charged into Bladefeather and he elbowed him in the gut as hard as he could. Shen's elbows were like steel girders. Bladefeather gasped hoarsely and before he could recover, Shen clasped his hands together and slammed them onto the back of his head. Bladefeather slumped on the ground and groaned droopily. Mushu leaped in and he tail-whipped Shen in the stomach. Mushu then kneed Shen in the stomach and while he did that, he added an elbow to the back of the shoulder. Shen groaned and Mushu kicked Shen onto his side. Shen quickly picked himself up and he landed a powerful punch on Mushu's left shoulder blade. There was a sickening crack sound and Mushu staggered over onto his knees. He clutched his throbbing arm. Shen had just broken his collar bone, rendering his left arm useless. Shen then proceeded to try and break the other collar bone but Matilda jumped into the air and kick

slammed him in the forehead. Shen staggered backwards and Matilda rapidly punched Shen in the torso, shoulders and face. Shen was too slow to block the first few heavy punches but he soon recuperated and he blocked any other punch Matilda threw at him. The two then had another episode of throwing heavy punches at each other whilst blocking the other's attacks. Up on the rooftop, Fong Zarr picked himself up and he pulled himself onto his feet. He had survived the attack after all. The quill had narrowly missed his heart so he lived the attack. He pulled the quill out of his chest and he saw Shen and Matilda brawling it out with each other. Fong Zarr's blood boiled with rage as he stared at Shen. He grabbed the cannon's rope, aimed it at Shen and prepared to fire.

"This is for betraying me!" he snarled.

He then pulled the rope and a huge fire blast hurtled towards Shen. Matilda saw the blast coming towards her and Shen and she ran for it. Shen grinned evilly, thinking Matilda was retreating until he heard the fireball coming towards him. He turned around and noticed it was too late to dodge. He just closed his eyes and accepted his fate. The fireball hit Shen and knocked him clean off his feet. His body was sent hurling backwards and he landed with a sickening crunch on the ground. Matilda stopped running and she turned around to see Shen, lying on the ground scorched and burnt and dead as a doornail. As much as she wanted to defeat Shen, she didn't want him to die. She wasn't the kind of person who believed killing was the only way. She was hoping that after beating Shen, she'd be able to get him to redeem himself but now she'd never get the chance to do so. Shen was dead. Bladefeather and Mushu saw Shen's dead body and their first thought was what had just happened.

"What happened Matilda?" asked Bladefeather.

"Someone shot Shen with a cannon." said Matilda "I'm guessing Fong Zarr did it as he was the only one near the cannon at the time."

"But Shen killed him." said Bladefeather.

"No he didn't." said Joel, pointing up to the rooftop and noticing Fong Zarr was climbing down from it "Fong Zarr survived apparently."

"Well at least he's alive so he can pay for his abysmal crimes." said Bladefeather "Destroying our festivals and siding with a traitor to kill Tai and Matilda. How boorish and baneful!"

Fong Zarr jumped down onto the ground and tried to run for it but Sora took an orb off her utility belt and she threw it at Fong Zarr. The orb exploded in front of him and a rope wrapped around his body. Fong Zarr fell onto his stomach and he struggled in his ropes. Emperor Tai emerged from his hiding place and stood over Fong Zarr. Master Gāng stood beside him with a stern look on his face.

"You Fong Zarr, have a lot to answer for!" said Tai crossly.

"You cannot do this to me!" yelled Fong Zarr "I'm not finished yet, the Yīnyǐng Mao clan will have its rrrrevenge and we shall get the glory we deserve!"

"The only glory you'll get is eternity in a dull stony prison cell!" snapped Master Gāng "I'll take him to the prison temple."

"Go ahead Master Gāng, I have to meet up with my daughter." said Tai with a kindly smile.

Master Gāng scooped the tied up Fong Zarr and draped him over his shoulder. He carried Fong Zarr away and carried him off to the prison temple where Zira the Ruthless was imprisoned. The moment Master Gāng left, Tai walked up to Matilda who was rubbing her aching arms. Matilda saw Tai and wondered what her father had to say about all this. Bladefeather and Mushu bowed down to Emperor Tai and Tai bowed down to them. Matilda bowed down to Tai as well. Tai just smiled at Matilda. Matilda looked at Tai and read his face like a book.

"I guess you're pleased with me daddy?" she asked.

"I am." said Tai softly "I'm very proud of you Matilda. You've risked your life just to stop the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and Governor Shen from wrecking anymore festivals and seizing my throne. As much as I was afraid you would die, I'm so glad you pulled through Matilda. You have brought honour back to me. I'm sorry I scolded you last night for something that wasn't your fault."

"It's OK daddy." said Matilda with happy tears in her eyes "I'm…I'm just too happy that everything's back to normal again!"

She threw her arms around Tai and hugged him. Tai hugged her happily back.

"You're my little treasure Matilda." said Tai "I couldn't ask for a better daughter."

"And I couldn't ask for a better father." said Matilda happily.

The two continued to hug each other lovingly. Bladefeather, Mushu and the spies watched the loving, tender moment with awe. It was nice to see a father and a daughter having such a lovely moment together. Now the horrors were finally over, Chun-Nan could recuperate from Shen's evil and Tai could finish his reign and once his reign was over, Matilda would take his place as empress and rule on in his name…

The next morning dawned bright and sunny. Fong Zarr had been imprisoned at last, Shen's body had been buried and had a grave set for it, Sora and Joel had left as their work was done, Mushu had his arm in a sling since Shen had broken his collar bone and Matilda and Bladefeather were sitting in the Pagoda of Prosperity's garden together, meditating and getting in touch with nature. The two lovers sat by the little pond and meditated peacefully to the beautiful quiet morning. They breathed in deeply and breathed out deeply in unison. They were both enjoying this quiet moment together.

"At last, things are back to normal." said Matilda softly "Chun-Nan's biggest villains are incarcerated, a traitor to the government's dead and the Five Festivals of Holy Honour will start over from scratch next week to make up for Fong Zarr and Shen's sabotaging."

"I know, very meritorious isn't it?" said Bladefeather "And I'm really pleased that Tai is content with us being in love with each other."

"I knew he would be." said Matilda with a dreamy look in her eyes "I'm so glad we've been able to reveal our love for each other. I bet

we'll be in eternal happiness together."

"I know we will." said Bladefeather with a sly smirk on his face.

He took Matilda's hand and held it gently.

"Shall we ever get married, I can imagine we'll be living many happy years together and nothing can ruin it since the villains of Chun-Nan are incarcerated and that magnanimous Sonic the Hedgehog is stopping Dr. Eggman from commencing with his baneful ambitions. Nothing can get in the way of our love together."

"I agree." said Matilda "I have a quick question Bladefeather." she suddenly said.

"What's that then my beautiful blossom flower?" asked Bladefeather flirtingly.

"…would you mind if we had a kid?" asked Matilda.

Bladefeather's reaction to that question was epically priceless. All he could do was stare at Matilda as if she'd grown an extra head.

" **NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO !** "….

Footnotes:

***See Part 1 to this arc**

LMFAO! Poor Bladefeather! Maybe Matilda's not the perfect girl for him after all! Oh well, arc's over! Join me next time as...wait a minute...Team Chaotix hasn't had an arc yet so...IT'S CHAOTIX TIME NEXT TIME! Reviews are welcome!

Rebellious Reptiles 1

Arc 7: Rebellious Reptiles

Takes place during stories 70-72 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: Old Memories Never Die

"Huh! Yet another case involving a missing teddy bear!" fumed Vector the Crocodile as he stormed back into his house "Oh well, we're the Chaotix Detective Agency and we never turn down work that pays as I always say."

After Team Chaotix had returned back to Stardom Village* they had been getting cases like mad. Most of them involved missing toys and other insignificant things like that but being the big hearted croc he was, Vector hadn't turned any of them down. He was just wondering why the Chaotix were getting these cases like crazy. Maybe children these days were just more careless then they were before. Vector slumped lazily on the sofa and sighed as he put his hands behind his head. His team mates, Espio the Chameleon and Charmy Bee sat down beside him. Hopefully, after so many cases today, Team Chaotix could have a moment of peace. There weren't anymore cases waiting for them right now so it looked as if they would get a minute or two to chill out and rest their weary bones. Vector was about to nod off and take a nap until Charmy decided to act silly as usual. The bee hated boredom and quiet so he decided to stoke up a conversation or two.

"Hey Vector!" Charmy buzzed "Out of all the cases we've had recently, which one's been your favourite?"

"Hmm, I think I liked that one where I had to find a little boy's pacifier after he dropped it down the toilet and accidentally flushed it away." said Vector "As smelly and dirty as it was, I don't mind. We crocodiles are used to the smell of the swamps so a toilet's stench is nothing to me."

"Pity we had to put up with the smell as you worked." said Espio, pulling a face "We chameleons aren't keen on strong smells."

"And we bees only like nice smells!" gagged Charmy as he thought on how rotten the toilet smelt "That toilet smelt like somebody died in it!"

"You two have wimpy noses." sneered Vector "No one has a tougher nose then I do."

"I can't argue with that Vector." said Espio "As for my favourite case we've had recently, I think my favourite was the one where we had to go all the way to Chun-Nan to help a little boy find his lost sash."

"You would say that Espio." said Vector "You're a ninja so you're bound to love Chun-Nan. And yet you don't live there."

"I know." said Espio "I came from Rainbow Valley which is very much like Chun-Nan so going to Chun-Nan almost felt like home to me so Chun-Nan was a pleasant experience for me."

"Maybe we should visit Rainbow Valley someday." suggested Charmy "Let Espio visit his old home and maybe meet his family again."

"That's probably the only sensible thing you've ever suggested Charmy." said Vector "I'll make a note of that and try and arrange a visit to Rainbow Valley."

"You don't have to fuss over me." said Espio "If I wanted to visit Rainbow Valley, I would have done so already. But thank you for thinking about me."

"No probs Espio." said Vector as he wrote on a notebook "Arrange visit to Rainbow Valley for Espio.".

"Just out of curiosity now we're on the topic of where we came from, where did you come from Charmy?" asked Espio.

Charmy's happy, excited face suddenly changed into an expression that seemed odd on his face. Sadness. It was clear the bee wasn't happy about something.

"Oh…gosh I was hoping no one would ask me that." said Charmy sadly, he stared at the floor and his eyes showed hurt and despair in them.

"Why? Is it that bad?" asked Vector.

"It is." said Charmy "I once came from the Golden Hive Colony in Nekronopolis. The Golden Hive Colony still exists now but I never go back to it."

"Why?" asked Vector and Espio.

"Because I'm forbidden or something like that." said Charmy as he racked his brain for some memories "I was kicked out of the colony because I was clumsy and too excitable. I didn't work hard enough and all I did was fool around like an idiot. The king and queen of the colony hated me the most in particular, they saw me as annoying and nothing more then a pest. So even though mommy and daddy tried to stop them, they threw me out and left me to take care of myself. They said I couldn't go back and that I had to make my own living. I had nowhere to go, no one to go to so I just made myself at home all alone in Rainbow Wood in Green Hill Zone. And that's when I found you Vector."

"Yeah, I was walking through Rainbow Wood at the time and I found you sitting near a tree crying your heart out." said Vector as he thought back to that day "I always wondered why you were there alone and why you were so upset. You wouldn't tell me, you just kept saying "Me want someone to look after me!" over and over so I took you in and raised you up to the little detective you are now."

"Yeah and you were awesome for that!" cried Charmy, his sadness suddenly gone as if he wasn't even sad about anything a moment ago "I love you guys and I love the Chaotix Detective Agency! Much better and much more fun then that boring colony I once worked for."

"Yeah." said Vector "I bet your parents miss you terribly."

"Yeah but they won't be allowed to look for me." muttered Charmy "No one's allowed to leave the colony for any reason whatsoever so

they're trapped with that mean king of theirs."

"Wow, those bees are jerks." muttered Vector.

Charmy just nodded in agreement and folded his arms. Memories of the king of the Golden Hive Colony clearly angered him as just thinking about him angered him.

"So now we've learnt about me and Charmy, where did you come from Vector?" asked Espio.

Vector's eyes widened and his whole body seemed to freeze up as if the very question had shot an arrow through his heart. Like Charmy, it was quite clear Vector didn't have anything pleasant to say. Nor did he appear to be willing to talk about his past. Espio and Charmy stared at Vector worriedly as if they had horrified him.

"Um…boss?" asked Charmy "Did Espio say something bad?"

Vector shook his head and he turned to Charmy.

"No Charmy, it's just I don't wanna talk about where I came from." said Vector "It's too unbelievable and you won't look at me the same way again."

"Why not?" asked Charmy.

"Look Charmy, I don't wanna talk about it so drop it!" snapped Vector "And you too Espio!"

"Roger." said Espio, wondering why Vector was acting so secretive.

"Let's talk about something else like how we first met each other." suggested Vector "We all know how me and Charmy met and I sure remember how we met you Espio."

"I remember how I met you two all too well." said Espio "I left Rainbow Valley looking for a career as I felt like there was more to life then being a ninja. My parents respected my decision to get a job so I left and looked for a job. I couldn't find anything until I came across this house. I knocked on the door, you answered, I asked if there were any jobs on offer and here I am, a detective who is also a

ninja and a spy too."

"I'm so glad I took you in Espio." said Vector with a big fat smile on his face "You're a credit to the team and you're a credit to the R.F.S. too what with your invisibility techniques and ninja skills."

"I know." said Espio "And I'm glad I joined you guys. I've learnt there is more to life then being a ninja. I have friends and I can use my skills for more then just battle. I hope my parents will be proud of me. I can't stand the thought of dishonouring them and displeasing them."

"Well we'll find out when we visit your home Espio." said Vector "Now, do you two wanna know how I formed this detective agency?"

"Yes!" cheered Charmy "Let's hear it!"

Vector opened his big, long jaws and was about to speak until the phone rang. Vector grumbled to himself, not pleased to be interrupted just when he was about to talk about something interesting, and he picked the phone up.

"Hello, this is the Chaotix Detective Agency, how may we help you?" he mumbled grumpily, not caring if he was setting a good example for the customer.

"Hello? Chaotix? Thank goodness I called you!" came the voice of none other then Vanilla the Rabbit.

"Miss Vanilla?" blurted Vector in surprise "What brings you onto our phone line then?"

"You won't be pleased to hear this but Knothole is under attack from some strange mercenaries!" shrieked Vanilla "They're attacking the villagers and…"

Suddenly, her voice disappeared and the phone went dead. Someone had obviously caught her and hung the phone up or something. Vector heard nothing more then a buzz on the other side of the line. He hung up and got to his feet.

"Boys!" he announced "We're going to Knothole!"

"Why?" asked Charmy.

"Some guys are attacking Knothole and they've got Vanilla!" explained Vector "She could be in trouble so let's go and stop those guys!"

"Roger that." said Espio.

The three Mobians ran out of the house and ran off to Knothole where the attackers were pillaging the village…

Meanwhile at Knothole, the villagers were being seized from their homes and dragged out into the middle of the village by some strange mercenaries that had not been seen in action before by anybody. Amongst the captured villagers were Mariah the Medicine Cat, Vanilla the Rabbit and her daughter Cream the Rabbit, who had just decided to pay her mother a visit while Sonic, Tails and Amy answered a call to Nekronopolis**. Cream hugged Vanilla worriedly as the attackers rounded up the villagers. The attackers were all reptilian creatures of various kinds ranging from the slim and slender salamander to the long and slithery snake to the large and intimidating Komodo Dragon. They were all wearing suits of armour and wielding ray guns. The armour they wore was dark blue in colour with light blue plating on the chests, thighs and lower arms. The boots were chunky and grey and they wore helmets with red visors. There were two reptiles in charge of this unfamiliar group of suited lizards. One was a chameleon about forty-five with four horns on his head and he had red skin and green eyes. The back of his head was shaped differently to that of Espio's and like the other reptiles, he was in a suit of armour but he didn't wear a helmet. The other was a frill-necked lizard aged thirty-eight with purple eyes, sharp teeth and a large yellow and red frill that he could extend at will to make himself appear larger and more intimidating. He had a very long thin tail and he wore a suit of armour like the other reptiles but he didn't have a helmet just like the chameleon. The villagers began to wonder what was going on and why they were being held like this. The chameleon and frill-necked lizard stood to attention and they spoke to the captured villagers.

"Attention people of Knothole." boomed the chameleon in his deep voice "You are being gathered around because we require some information from you all."

"What kind of information?" hissed Mariah bravely.

"The whereabouts of Castle Acorn." said the frill-necked lizard "We are the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and we have a score to settle with Castle Acorn. If you don't tell us where Castle Acorn is, we'll burn this village down and kill you all."

The villagers all murmured to one another about what the frill-necked lizard had just said to them. Cream the Rabbit, had a feeling that the reptiles didn't have good intentions for Castle Acorn at all so she and her pet Chao Cheese stood forward and glared up at the chameleon and frill-necked lizard.

"You two evil reptiles can't just burst into our village and terrorize us like this!" yelled Cream "Get out of our village and leave us alone!"

The chameleon pointed a gun at Cream's head and threatened to shoot her, earning a frightened expression from the rabbit.

"Get back in line you little brat!" snarled the chameleon "Or I'll show you the penalty of standing up to the Region of Rebellious Reptiles!"

"Sorry sir." said Cream, retreating quickly back to the group of villagers while shaking slightly.

Vanilla wrapped her arms around Cream and kept her close to her chest. The chameleon glared angrily at Cream and then diverted his attention back to the crowd.

"So, can any of you morons tell us where Castle Acorn is?" he asked.

The crowd stayed quiet. Most of the villagers didn't know where Castle Acorn was and any who did know where Castle Acorn was such as Cream and Mariah didn't want to tell them were Castle Acorn was as they had a feeling that the Region of Rebellious Reptiles didn't have good intentions for the castle. The chameleon looked at the frill-necked lizard and the frill necked lizard looked at

the chameleon.

"I think they're lying to us Vladek." whispered the chameleon.

"Either they're not telling us or they all just coincidentally don't know where Castle Acorn is Romeo." said Vladek "I think we should question them all in turn and see which one we can get to talk."

"I agree Vladek." said Romeo "Let's start with the ignorant rabbit child who stood up to us."

Romeo and Vladek marched up to the crowd of villagers and they bent down to Cream's height. The rabbit suddenly grew nervous. Were they going to hurt her? Vanilla clutched Cream tightly and tried to hide her fear.

"P-p-please, don't hurt my daughter." begged Vanilla "She didn't mean to s-s-stand up to you."

"We don't wish to inflict pain of any nature on the girl." lied Vladek "We wish to question her."

"What do you want to ask me?" asked Cream.

"Do you know where Castle Acorn is?" purred Romeo "Now be truthful on this because we're only going to ask once."

"I…I do not know where…gulp!...Castle Acorn is." lied Cream "Honest. Cross my heart and everything."

Vladek and Romeo did not seem to believe Cream at all. They flashed their teeth at Cream and glowered at her.

"We suspect that to be a lie of some sorts." hissed Vladek "Tell us the truth girl. Where is Castle Acorn?"

"I never tell lies!" snapped Cream "I don't know where the Castle is! Please leave me alone!" she wailed.

Romeo lashed out and grabbed Cream by her ears and yanked her out of Vanilla's grasp. Vanilla put her hands to her face in shock as Romeo lifted Cream off the ground by her ears. Cream yelped loud

enough to wake the entire village up. Cheese squeaked in fright and flew about madly. Romeo glowered at Cream and Cream began to shake.

"Don't toy around with us you little brat!" snarled Romeo "Me and Vladek can sniff a liar out anywhere! Now tell us the truth or I'll proceed to rip your stupid ears off!"

"No! Please not my ears!" sobbed Cream.

"Then tell us where Castle Acorn is and don't bother lying because we can tell if you are or not!" roared Vladek.

"OK!" squealed Cream "I'll tell you! But you must leave us alone or I won't tell you."

"We don't care, we're not here to wreck Knothole." said Romeo truthfully "Now tell us nice and slowly so we can get you nice and easily."

Cream looked sadly at her mother who only looked helplessly back at her daughter. Cream could tell from Vanilla's expression that her mother didn't want her to tell them where Castle Acorn was but Cream didn't want to be permanently deaf so she had to tell or she'd get hurt and then the two reptiles would go hurting the others. Cream looked back at Romeo and softly spoke.

"Castle Acorn…is…"

Before she could finish her sentence, Team Chaotix arrived in Knothole at last and Vector socked Romeo in the head, causing him to drop Cream and fall onto his side. Cream quickly scurried back over to Vanilla, the mother rabbit wrapping her arms around her daughter to clam her down. Vector, Espio and Charmy all stood before Romeo and Vladek, the two only staring back angrily at Vector.

"Alright you reptilian rascals!" growled Vector "You can stop bullying the villagers of Knothole or my hard, solid fist will connect rather sharply with your soft, scaly bellies!"

"Really Vector?" sneered Vladek "Would you really wanna hurt your

old comrades? Some respect you have for us and our leader!"

Vector's eyes widened all of the sudden. How did that frill-necked lizard know his name? Was he an old friend or enemy or something? And what did he mean by old comrades? Whoever he was, Vector didn't recognize him.

"How do you know who I am?" demanded Vector angrily.

"Puh! Nine years past and you forget who we are." scoffed Vladek "You really have a short memory you do Vector. Maybe this will jog your memory?"

He lifted his arm up and showed him the underside of his arm. There was a logo implanted on the underside of his arm armour. The logo had an image of a snake's head with an open mouth and blood dripping from its fangs. The background of the logo was blood red and there was a black outline around the snake's head. Vector gasped in horror. He recognized that logo! It was the logo of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles! Vector knew those guys from a while back and he wasn't pleased to see them again.

"You!" he blurted "You're the guys from the Region of Rebellious Reptiles!"

"What?" cried Espio and Charmy in unison.

"Fan-whooping-tastic!" sneered Romeo sarcastically "He remembers us after all! I'm sure Lord Sycorax will be happy to hear that we've reunited with the region deserter!"

"Vector? What are they talking about?" asked Espio.

Vector didn't answer Espio. He just grabbed Romeo and Vladek by their necks and bashed them together. The chameleon and frill-necked lizard both droned dopily after that astonishing head bash. Vector then proceeded to throw them away and cause them to crash into the ground.

"Everybody, get to safety! Me and the boys will handle this!" ordered Vector.

The crowd did not wait to be asked twice. They all ran away from the fight scene and stood on the sidelines, watching as the Region soldiers circled around Vector, Espio and Charmy and prepared to let them have it with their ray guns. Vector, Espio and Charmy prepared to do battle with the rascally reptiles as they advanced on them.

"Vector, how do you know these guys?" asked Espio.

"I'll explain later." said Vector "Although I wish I didn't have to. Now is not the time."

"Why? What time do you wanna explain this at?" asked Charmy stupidly "Twelve o' clock? Three o'clock? Half past six?"

"That's not what I meant you klutzy bee!" snapped Vector "We've got these jokers to defeat!"

Romeo and Vladek picked themselves up and they joined the circle of reptiles that prepared to attack the Chaotix.

"Reptile Rebels! Attack!" bellowed Romeo "Kill the bee if you want but don't kill Vector and his chameleon friend! We'll see if we can get them to join us!"

"Yes sir." said the Reptile Rebels.

"What's so special about you two?" muttered Charmy.

"We're reptiles." said Vector "They'll take in any reptile they can lay their scaly claws on."

"Well I'm not joining them!" growled Espio, drawing out a pair of shuriken and throwing them at the Reptile Rebels, forcing them to retreat and run for their lives "I will not dishonour the Kingdom of Acorns or my friends by joining the enemy!"

Espio began to throw shuriken in every direction at the Reptile Rebels. The soldiers all ran for cover from the deadly shuriken. Espio stopped throwing shuriken so Vector and Charmy could attack. They all sprang into action and the soldiers began firing their ray guns at Vector and Charmy. Knothole was a nice bustling village

and now it had been turned into a battle zone between The Chaotix and the Region of Rebellious Reptiles…

A very, very long distance away from Knothole, a huge battle ship loomed in the sky, shadowing anything on the ground below. The ship was a huge behemoth of a vessel. It was shaped vaguely like a crocodile with wings replacing the legs and the head being a cockpit as well as concealing a large weapon. The ship was green and detailed to look like it had scales. The tail could be used as a weapon as well as for balance. The ship was the flagship of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles' fleet. The ship was commanded by Lord Sycorax, the leader of the Region.

Lord Sycorax was the epitome of egotism. He was so vain and narcissistic it didn't seem natural. Lord Sycorax was a crocodile with dark green skin and a yellowish, green belly. He wore a uniquely shaped helmet with a visor for his fearsome red eyes and armour plating that covered his snout. He wore an armour piece on his back that had two structures that stood up behind his head, shoulder pads and had two structures that sat in front of his shoulder. The left structure had the Region of Rebellious Reptiles' logo on it. He had armoured gauntlets on the lower parts of his arms, red gloves, long red shoes with black soles and metal pieces on them with spikes pointing backwards. His tail was very long compared to most crocodiles and his spikes were bigger then even Vector's His left arm had some bite mark scars on it, suggesting he'd had a painful encounter with somebody before. Right now, Lord Sycorax was doing one of his favourite hobbies, admiring himself in the mirror. He was such a narcissist that in his spare time, he just admired himself in the mirror and crowed to himself.

"Aaaah." he said to himself "Lord Sycorax, you are still looking as amazing as always. How do you do it old boy? You are just a king when it comes to looking good."

Then suddenly, his admiration of himself was interrupted by a gecko in traditional region armour bursting into his cabin and looking frantic.

"What is it Edward? Can't you see I'm busy crowing about my brilliance?" snapped Lord Sycorax.

"Sorry Lord, it's just Romeo and Vladek have run into some trouble!" croaked Edward.

His voice made him sound like he was constantly being strangled, even though no one was clutching his throat right now.

"Trouble?" scoffed Lord Sycorax "Poppycock! The Region of Rebellious Reptiles doesn't run into trouble! It MAKES trouble!"

"Yes I know but they've run into some trouble right now!" repeated Edward "They're fighting a trio of heroes!"

"Really? And what heroes might THEY be then?" snarled Lord Sycorax.

"Well there's a chameleon and a bee, I don't know who they are, but Vector is in the team!" reported Edward.

Lord Sycorax's red eyes widened so much they almost broke through his visor.

"Vector?" he blurted "That double-crossing, swamp swallowing, arm biting traitor has his own team now?"

"Yes!" croaked Edward "They're fighting Romeo and Valdek's squadron in Knothole Village right now!"

Lord Sycorax put a finger to his long snout and mused to himself.

"After all these years, Vector runs into us once again." purred Lord Sycorax "Well maybe I can get him back on my side. Set coordinates for Knothole and then take us there!" he barked at Edward.

"Yes sir." said Edward with a salute.

Edward ran out of the room and ran towards the cockpit. Lord Sycorax looked back at himself in the mirror and smiled as wide as he possibly could.

"Vector you back-stabbing wretch, the Region is coming to retrieve you." he hissed to himself "And hopefully, you'll be willing to comply to the Region's rules this time. I'll make you a permanent member of the Region and you will never betray me again!"

He then proceeded to laugh evilly at the top of his voice. His laughter filled the cabin and could be heard for miles around. He couldn't wait to see Vector's face when he showed himself to him once again…

Back in Knothole, Team Chaotix and the Reptile Rebels were in one heck of a frantic fight. Ray guns blasted everywhere and soldiers leaped this way and that as they and the Chaotix brawled with each other. The villagers of Knothole all watched the fight, making sure to stay out of the way as they battled. They didn't want to get caught in the middle of this. Two Reptile Rebels blasted at Vector but the crocodile dodged their shots and gave them both an uppercut to the chin that knocked them senseless. Vladek stepped in and used his tail as a whip. He whipped Vector's nose, causing the crocodile to yelp in pain and Vladek dropkicked Vector in the snout. The crocodile was knocked onto his back. Vladek turned Vector onto his stomach, grabbed Vector's arm and forced it behind his back. Vector fought the pain as he was a strong crocodile. Vladek barred his teeth and raised his frill. He hissed menacingly at Vector.

"Come on Vector, don't rebel against the very Region you were born in!" growled Vladek "Come back to us! You were meant to be part of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles, not be part of some playgroup band that you call a team!"

"Look frilly, I left you guys for a reason and I said it before and I'll say it again, I am never, EVER going back!" growled Vector, wrenching his arm free from Vladek's grip and elbowing him in the eye.

Vladek clutched his eye and roared in pain. Vector pushed Vladek off of himself and got back to his feet. He seized Vladek by the tail with his jaws and spun him around in a circle. Vector began to spin around and around faster and faster until Vladek became nothing

more then a blue, yellow and red blur. Vector kept on spinning and then finally, he let go and Vladek hurtled through the air like a rocket, screaming at the top of his voice as he did so. He crashed into someone's house and went straight through the roof. The villager who owned the house immediately went berserk.

"Hey! That's my house you're wrecking!" he yelled at Vector.

"Sorry." said Vector "I was aiming for a tree."

As for Romeo, he and a group of soldiers were all fighting Espio and Charmy. Since the soldiers were allowed to kill Charmy, they cut loose harder then they did on Espio and Vector. Poor Charmy was having a hard time dodging all the ray gun blasts as the Reptile Rebels kept trying to shoot the poor bee. Espio effortlessly fended off any soldier attacking him with his ninjutsu skills and he threw a shuriken at the soldiers shooting at Charmy. The shuriken skimmed everybody across the back and the soldiers yelped in pain as a sharp flush of pain surged through their backs like an ocean wave. Charmy was pleased that they weren't shooting at him anymore and he zoomed down towards the Reptile Rebels. He fisted them all in the head as he flew by and then he proceeded to charge at them and kick them all in the head as he flew by. Romeo leaped up into the air and dropkicked Charmy into the ground. Espio leaped up and ninja-kicked Romeo in the back. The two chameleons crashed into the ground but they weren't down for long. They picked themselves up and they linked hands with one another. They grappled with each other and they pushed on one another.

"OK you, how do you guys know Vector and what do you mean by you're his old comrades?" demanded Espio angrily.

"I think I'd much rather let the Region deserter tell you that himself." said Romeo "It'll be more painful coming from him then us."

Espio growled at Romeo and head-butted him in the forehead. Romeo let go of Espio and clutched his aching head. Espio then kicked Romeo in the gut and then karate chopped him in the head. Romeo punched at Espio but Espio dodged and smacked him in the back, knocking him onto his face. A Reptile Rebel shot at Espio but Espio back-flipped out of the way and landed behind the Rebel. He

kicked the Reptile Rebel in the back and knocked him onto his face. Romeo picked himself up, snatched the fallen rebel's gun and fired at Espio. Espio dodged the blast and he ran up towards Romeo. Romeo threw the gun away and gave Espio an uppercut that sent him flying through the air. Charmy caught Espio before he could crash into the ground and he lowered Espio down. Romeo tried to attack Espio but Charmy flew into Romeo's face and knocked him over. Romeo picked himself up and smacked Charmy in the back of the head. Charmy smacked Romeo back and head-butted him in the gut. Charmy then proceeded to pick Romeo up and throw him into a pair of Komodo Dragons that were trying to shoot him. The two Komodo Dragons were knocked off their feet as Romeo crashed headfirst into them. Charmy laughed at him.

"Ha, ha, ha! You guys are pathetic!" he laughed "I'm winning and you're not!"

"Charmy! Focus on the battle instead of fooling around!" snapped Espio as he fended off another soldier who was a salamander in Reptile Rebel armour.

"OK." said Charmy.

Charmy flew down towards the salamander that was attacking Espio and he charged into its legs, taking them out from underneath it and bringing it down on its side. Espio threw a shuriken at the salamander's arm. The shuriken embedded itself into the ground, pinning the salamander's arm down and trapping it there. Before the salamander could try and free himself, Espio threw another shuriken at his other arm, pinning it to the ground and trapping the salamander. Then suddenly, two Reptile Rebels, who were an alligator and a skink respectively, crept up behind Espio and blaster him with their ray guns. Espio was brought down on his knees and his back was stinging with pain. The alligator then proceeded to clasp his hands together and attempt to hammer Espio's head in. Charmy flew into the alligator's face and fisted him in the eyes. The alligator clutched his sore eyes, giving Charmy the perfect opportunity to trip him up. He charged into the alligator's feet and knocked him over. The alligator landed on his face. The skink tried to shoot Charmy but he missed and Espio picked himself up. He fought the searing pain in his back and managed to ram the skink

with his shoulder. The skink sprawled on the ground and groaned in pain. Espio and Charmy then gave each other a high-five for their efforts.

As for Vector, Vladek had emerged from the house he had crashed into and he leaped onto Vector in a blind rage. Vector grabbed Vladek before he could land on him and he threw Vladek into the ground. Vladek sprawled on the ground but the frill-necked lizard wasn't down for long. He picked himself up and charged at Vector again, his frill extended and his teeth bared. Vector punched Vladek aside and Vladek ended up with a mouthful of dirt again. Two Komodo Dragons, one with grey scales and no helmet and one with green scales with a helmet, grabbed Vector from behind by his arms and they held him into place. Komodo Dragons were very powerful lizards after all, not to mention very big lizards so Vector would have some trouble getting out of this one. A Reptile Rebel, who was an iguana, drew out his ray gun and prepared to stun Vector with it until Vector managed to wrestle himself out of the Komodo Dragon's grasp. He grabbed the green scaled Komodo Dragon and threw him into the iguana. The two were sent sprawling on the ground. The grey scaled Komodo Dragon walloped Vector in the face with a powerful punch. Vector was sent spinning around in a dizzy circle but he quickly recovered and he punched the Komodo Dragon in the jaw. The Komodo Dragon punched Vector back and the then the two grappled each other's shoulders and began to wrestle with each other. The Komodo Dragon then suddenly lifted Vector off the ground and threw him backwards. Vector crashed into the ground and skidded to a halt, leaving a huge mound of dirt in the ground. The Komodo Dragon advanced on Vector, cracking his knuckles. He had a big fat smile on his scaly face.

"Ha, ha, ha Vector!" cackled the Komodo Dragon "No matter how many times we fight, I always win! That's because I am the strongest reptile in the Region!"

"No you're not Diesel!" retorted Vector "Lord Sycorax is! And I've had some major workouts after I left so I'm more then a match for you this time!"

"That will be determined not by our boastful bragging but by our steely punches." growled the Komodo Dragon, who's name was

apparently Diesel "Put them up Vector!"

"You're on Diesel!" growled Vector.

Vector and Diesel then proceeded to punch each other as hard as they possibly could. They hit each other in the face and they were sent staggering backwards. Diesel recovered first and punched Vector in the jaw. Vector fought back with a chomp on the arm. Diesel roared in pain and he tail-whipped Vector in the gut. He then kicked Vector and knocked him onto his back. Diesel smirked at him.

"Still biting arms as always?" he sneered "No wonder Lord Sycorax nicknamed you "Arm-Biter"!"

"Shut up you big, lumbering, scaly jerk!" snapped Vector.

He leaped onto his feet and walloped Diesel in the face with a powerful punch. He then proceeded to punch Diesel again as hard as he possibly could and then again, both punches being aimed at his face. Vector then let him have it in the face two more times and then he punched him in the stomach. Vector punched Diesel in the face again, knocking him backwards but not over and Vector then proceeded to grab Diesel with his jaws. He tossed the Komodo Dragon through the air and he crashed into a tree, knocking it over and sending it crashing onto the ground. Diesel groaned in pain, wondering which way was up. He didn't remember Vector being that strong. The crocodile had clearly had some major workouts since the last time they met. Vector ran over to Diesel, ready to let him have it again until Romeo rammed him from the side and knocked him over. Vladek pounced on Vector and pinned him down. Romeo helped Vladek in pinning Vector down and Diesel picked himself up. He stomped over to Vector, cracking his knuckles and grinning evilly. His sharp white teeth glistened like a thousand daggers in bright sunlight. Vector stared up helplessly at Diesel as he advanced on him. The Komodo Dragon glared down at Vector with his fearsome yellow eyes.

"You've been fun as always Vector." crowed Diesel "But now it's time to take you on a trip to dreamland. This punch will knock you out cold!"

He then proceeded to draw his arm back and aim right for Vector's cranium. That one punch would be enough to knock Vector out. Vector closed his eyes and waited for Diesel to let him have it. Then, just as it looked as if Vector would end up being knocked out, Espio kicked Diesel in the side of the head and sent him rolling across the ground. Charmy stung both Vladek and Romeo in the bottom, causing them to yelp and let go of Vector to clutch their throbbing bottoms. Vector picked himself up and socked the chameleon and frill-necked lizard directly in the face. The two reptiles were sent sprawling on the ground and they grimaced in pain. Vector turned to his team mates.

"Whew, thanks guys." he said with a thankful smile on his face.

"Don't mention it Vector." said Espio "We're just doing our duty."

"Yeah like beating up those stupid reptiles!" giggled Charmy "I wonder why they hate you so much?"

"I'll explain later Charmy." muttered Vector "Right now, we've still got jerks to beat."

Diesel picked himself up and glared at Team Chaotix with his steely yellow eyes. He practically had a basilisk stare in those eyes.

"I'll snap all your necks for that!" he roared.

"Just try it you lumbering sack of leather!" retorted Vector.

Diesel lunged at Vector with a powerful punch but he missed and Vector grabbed his arm. He swung Diesel over onto his back and slammed him on the ground. Diesel picked himself up and tried to attack Vector again but Espio punched him ninja-style, causing the Komodo Dragon to stagger to the side. Diesel picked himself up and then gave Espio an uppercut that seemed to knock whatever sense Espio had in his body out. Espio hurled through the air in a perfect arch and landed with a bone-crunching crash on his back. Espio picked himself up just as Diesel was about to let him have it once again. Charmy flew into Diesel's face and kicked him on the nose. Diesel yelped and clawed at Charmy, missing the bee by inches. Vector then ran into Diesel and grabbed him. He carried him over to

a tree and he threw the Komodo Dragon into one. Diesel crashed into the tree and like the first one he'd crashed into, he knocked it over. Vector then gathered up Espio and Charmy and the three huddled around each other.

"OK guys, Diesel is a real toughie so we need to use our special move." whispered Vector.

"You mean that one where we curl up into balls, you grab us with your mouth and you throw us into the enemy?" asked Charmy "Whoo! I love that game!"

"It's not a game Charmy." corrected Espio "I agree with you in that Vector. Let's use that move."

The three agreed on that and they turned around to see Diesel running up to them, roaring at the top of his vocal chords. Espio and Charmy bent down on the ground and curled up into balls. Vector grabbed them both with his jaws and picked them up. Diesel was almost on them. He had his claws and teeth bared and he was prepared to let them have it. Vector swung his head to one side and then back again. He opened his jaws and let go of Charmy and Espio. Charmy and Espio hurtled into Diesel and the Komodo Dragon was sent hurling backwards after feeling the full force of the chameleon and bee in their power ball mode. Diesel hurtled backwards and landed on the ground. He skidded to a very painful halt and he lay in the mound of dirt he made, groaning loudly and looking up at the sky, wondering which way was up. Romeo and Vladek could see that the Chaotix were too powerful for them, their soldiers and even Diesel so they decided now would be a good time to flee the scene.

"Reptiles! Retreat!" yelled Vladek.

The Reptile Rebels did not wait to be asked twice. As stubborn and hot-headed as they were, they knew when to retreat. The soldiers all gathered up their weapons and they ran out of Knothole as fast as their scaly feet would let them. Diesel, who was usually one to stay and fight, knew that retreating was the only option now. Team Chaotix were too powerful for him. The Komodo Dragon picked himself up and ran after Romeo and Vladek just as they were fleeing

Knothole right now. The Chaotix just watched as the Reptile Rebels fled for it. The moment all the Reptile Rebels had fled, the citizens of Knothole began cheering for Team Chaotix. Vanilla and Cream ran up to the Chaotix and Cream danced for joy in front of them.

"Yay for the Chaotix!" cheered Cream.

"Chao, Chao!" cheered her pet Chao Cheese.

"Thank you so much you wonderful boys." said Vanilla kindly "You saved Knothole from those horrible reptiles."

"Ah it was nothing Vanilla." boasted Vector "I looked those losers square in the eye and said "Hey reptiles! You're gonna be sorry you messed with Knothole today!" and we let them have it!"

He pounded the palm of his hand with his fist.

"I'm so glad I met you three otherwise we would be in a horrible state right now." said Vanilla sweetly "You boys are so wonderful."

Vector went red in the face. Charmy laughed at him, earning a grizzly stare from Vector which suddenly made the bee stop. Espio tapped Vector's arm and cleared his throat. Vector looked at him.

"Yes?" he asked.

"Now we've stopped those reptiles," said Espio "Can you explain to us how those guys now you, how you know them and why they claim to be your old comrades?"

Vector's cheery face turned into a grumpy frown. It was quite clear he didn't want to answer the question, nor did he want Team Chaotix to know the answer.

"I'll explain everything when we get home." said Vector slowly.

He then turned to Vanilla and waved goodbye to her and Cream.

"So long Miss Vanilla, by Cream." he said.

"Goodbye Mr. Vector and thank you for everything today." said

Cream sweetly.

"Goodbye Vector." said Vanilla with a wave "Take care."

Vector waved the bunnies goodbye and he left Knothole with Espio and Charmy just behind him. Once he got home though, he'd have a lot of questions to answer. Questions he didn't want to answer and questions he didn't want Team Chaotix to know the answer to. He was not going to enjoy telling his friends the truth about himself…

Back on the Reptile Rebel flagship, Romeo, Vladek and Diesel had arrived back on the mighty ship and were reporting their failure to Lord Sycorax. The crocodile in the armour plating and helmet was not pleased with their news.

"You got beaten up by Vector and his friends and were forced to retreat?" snarled Lord Sycorax, back-handing Diesel and sending him hurling slap-bang into a wall "Do you have any notion of the consequences of your blunder you wretched reptiles?"

Diesel groaned in pain and slumped against the wall, which now had a huge dent in it. Romeo and Vladek began to sweat madly.

"We're sorry sir!" squeaked Vladek "We had to retreat! We couldn't beat those three, they were too powerful!"

Lord Sycorax jammed his face into Vladek's face, making him shudder and almost scream.

"I don't care if they were too powerful or not!" roared Lord Sycorax "You should have kept the fight going until I arrived! I could have helped you then! Instead, you ran away, making the Region of Rebellious Reptiles look cowardly and pathetic and also preventing me from reaching Vector as he's bound to have left Knothole by now! And to think I was five minutes away from arriving at that repugnant village!"

"Not all is lost sir." said Romeo "One of Vector's buddies is a bee and I managed to sneak a tracking device on his helmet so we'll be able to find Vector."

Lord Sycorax's scaly face twisted into a sickly smile as if he'd just eaten somebody's child and enjoyed it.

"Then lock onto Vector's friend's coordinates." hissed Lord Sycorax "It's time to bring Vector back into the Region where he belongs…"

Back at the Chaotix Detective Agency's Office, Vector, Espio and Charmy all sat down on the sofa and Vector breathed in deeply. He sighed heavily and slowly spoke.

"Guys, this is a story I didn't want to tell you. But you wanna know the truth and now is the time you must know."

"Take your time Vector." said Espio quietly "We don't need you to hurry."

Vector nodded and then he spoke.

"I know the Region of Rebellious Reptiles because I was part of that group once." explained Vector "I was even BORN in that group, raised in that group even."

Charmy and Espio stared in horror at what Vector had just said to them. They were having trouble comprehending all of this.

"You were part of the Region?" choked Espio.

"Does that mean you're a bad guy?" shrieked Charmy.

"No! It doesn't!" protested Vector "Well, it sorta does but that was then and this is now."

"So you were born in the Region of Rebellious Reptiles?" mused Espio "Why aren't you a part of them now?"

"Let's start at the beginning." said Vector "I was born in the Region of the Rebellious Reptiles. My momma was part of the Region and once she gave birth to me, she was kicked out as the region has a thing against women for some reason. I was then raised by the leader of the Region, Lord Sycorax and I was supposed to become

a soldier for the region. He inspired me and trained me and filled my head with dark thoughts. But something just didn't feel right to me. Something about the region felt kind of wrong. I felt like I shouldn't be doing evil stuff and I shouldn't be serving an army or rebellious reptiles so when I was eleven, I left the Region much to Lord Sycorax's dismay. He tried to stop me from leaving the region but I bit him on the arm and ran for my life. He tried to catch me but I dived into a swamp and escaped. He swore revenge on me but nine years passed and I hadn't heard a peep from him since. Until now that is."

"So you left the Region of Rebellious Reptiles because you felt like you didn't belong?" said Espio "I think you made the right choice Vector."

"I know I made the right choice." said Vector "Those guys are jerks."

"Hey Vector, why is it called the Region of Rebellious Reptiles?" asked Charmy "Who or what are they rebelling against?"

"Politics." said Vector grimly.

"Politics?" blurted Espio.

"Polly sticks?" asked Charmy stupidly.

"Yes, politics." said Vector "For some reason, the region hates governments and politics so they rebel against them. They destroy parliaments, governments and whatever is politically related. This in turn earned them the nickname of "The Purges of Politics". That's why I felt like being on their side was wrong. Lord Sycorax told me that politics were bad and must be destroyed but as I learnt more about governments growing up, I realized that a world without politics cannot go round. We need governments to keep things under control and keep world order or else we'd be savages so that's why I left them."

"I see." said Espio "But why is the region just full of reptiles?"

"You know what they say about us reptiles." fumed Vector "Reptiles are as rebellious as they can get. Lord Sycorax took that saying to

his advantage and formed the region around it. Now any reptile that rebels against anything joins him for the glory of destroying whatever it is they're rebelling against. Not all reptiles rebel against politics but politics is the main subject of the region."

Espio nodded in an understanding manner.

"One more question." he said "If your mother was kicked out of the region, then what happened to the father? Who was he?"

Vector looked even sadder and he sighed loudly.

"You're not gonna believe this but…Lord Sycorax." he said with a heavy sigh.

Espio and Charmy almost fainted with shock.

"Your dad's the leader of the region?" cried Espio.

"Vector's dad is a bad guy?" shrieked Charmy.

"Yes, my dad is Lord Sycorax, the leader of the region." muttered Vector "I never wanted to tell you those things because I was worried that you wouldn't believe me or you wouldn't look at me the same way again. I hope you don't hate me now."

"Vector, just because you were born in villain territory doesn't mean we don't like you anymore." said Espio "You're not the Vector the region once knew, you're a much better reptile then you were at first and the fact you deserted the region at the first available opportunity makes you the best reptile there is."

"Thanks Espio." said Vector "I'm so glad you two are still willing to stick up for me even after learning about my past."

"Aw Vector, you're the closet thing to a dad I have now so I ain't gonna ditch ya!" Charmy assured the crocodile.

"And you're the best friend a ninja chameleon could ask for so I will still be on your side." said Espio with a heavy tone of loyalty in his voice.

Vector smiled at his friends and he gave them a great big hug each.

"Aw you guys are the bestest!" cried Vector "I'm so touched I might break down right now!"

"Cry baby." muttered Charmy.

Then suddenly, the Chaotix heard the sound of marching feet approaching and a ship hovering just above the house outside. Vector's blood froze. He had a horrible feeling on who this might be. Espio and Charmy had a feeling that it might be what Vector was thinking. The Region of Rebellious Reptiles had found them! But how? They didn't know where Vector lived! The marching feet stopped just outside the door and Diesel the Komodo Dragon's voice boomed from the other side of the door.

"Vector and friends!" he bellowed "We have you surrounded! Come on out with your hands up or we will blow your house up with you inside!"

Footnotes:

***Team Chaotix left Royal HQ in *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 68**

**** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 70**

Looks like Vector's past has come back to kill him! Can he and the Chaotix survive the Region of Rebellious Reptiles? Or will the Region make mincemeat out of them? Join me next time as Vector and Lord Sycorax have a rematch... Reviews are welcome.

Rebellious Reptiles 2

Arc 7: Rebellious Reptiles

Takes place during stories 70-72 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2: Back in the Region

"Vector and friends!" came the voice of Diesel the Komodo Dragon from outside the house "We have you surrounded! Come on out with your hands up or we will blow your house up with you inside!"

Vector the Crocodile clutched Espio the Chameleon and Charmy Bee close to himself as he heard the sounds of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles outside of the house, demanding for him to surrender himself immediately. The Region of Rebellious Reptiles were mercenaries who destroyed whatever they rebelled against, mostly politics and Vector was a deserter of the group so the region had come to try and get him back on their side. Vector stayed sat on the sofa while hugging Espio and Charmy so hard, he almost suffocated them. Diesel bellowed again.

"We will not warn you again!" the Komodo Dragon bellowed "Come out with your hands up or we will blow your house up with you inside! This is your final warning!"

"What should we do Vector?" asked Charmy worriedly "Should we go and face those guys?"

"I really don't wanna but we have no choice Charmy." said Vector grimly "They'll kill us if we don't give in to them. But how the heck did they find us? They don't know where I live!"

Espio wondered on that too. He then heard a very faint beeping noise, a beeping noise that was unfamiliar to him. He looked over at Charmy who was shaking like a leaf. The beeping noise appeared to be coming from him. Espio then began to get suspicious.

"Charmy, turn around." he ordered.

"Oh um…OK." said Charmy, not really sure we he had to do so.

Charmy flew out of Vector's grasp and turned around, showing his back off to Espio and Vector. Everything looked fine except for one small thing. Vector and Espio could see a little device with a blinking red light on the back of the bee's head. The reptiles immediately knew what it was.

"A tracking device!" cried Espio "That's how they found us!"

"Tracking device? Where?" shrieked Charmy, feeling all over his back for it.

"On the back of your head Charmy!" yelled Vector.

Charmy took his helmet off and saw the device on the back of it. He took the device off and gave it to Vector. Vector promptly crushed the device in between his finger and thumb so the Region wouldn't be able to track him down once he escaped.

"How did that device even get there?" asked Vector.

"I dunno." said Charmy "How should I…"

Then suddenly, his feeble brain ticked and Charmy thought back to the fight in Knothole earlier. Romeo the Chameleon, one of the Reptile Rebels, smacked him on the back of the head. Maybe he had the tracking device in his hand when he smacked Charmy and that smack planted the device on his helmet! That's how it got there!

"Of course!" cried Charmy "Earlier in the fight, this crazy red chameleon guy smacked me in the back of the head! It didn't hurt much really but I think that's how he got that device on me! He planted the device on me after smacking my head!"

"Well that's the only possible way that device got on your helmet so it must be true." said Espio "We'd best make sure no one else smacks us in the back of the head."

"Vector! Come out or you go up in smoke!" bellowed Diesel from the

other side of the door "You have ten seconds to come out and surrender yourself! If you don't, you will be destroyed!"

The Komodo Dragon then began to count down.

"Ten…nine…eight…seven…six…"

Vector, as much as he didn't want to face the very region he deserted again, he really had no choice. He would get blown up if he didn't succumb to them so he had to surrender or he would die. Vector stood up from the sofa and marched through the door and outside just as Diesel counted down to three. Espio and Charmy followed him. Diesel immediately stopped counting the moment the door opened and Team Chaotix stepped outside and raised their hands. The sight the Chaotix were met with was immense and unexpected. There were hordes of Reptile Rebels of all shapes and sizes and there were various modes of transport such as walker pods with Gatling Guns on either side, dune buggies with heavy weaponry and the very flagship of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles loomed above Stardom Village, the very home place of the Chaotix. Vector remembered that battleship as if he saw it only yesterday. It hadn't changed one little bit since the last time he saw it and the very sight of the ship made him quiver with rage. Still, he couldn't fight the entire region off by himself so he had to surrender right now. The moment Diesel saw that Team Chaotix had surrendered, he ordered Romeo the Chameleon and Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard to restrain them. Romeo and Vladek marched up to the Chaotix and put laser cuffs on all three of them, cuffing their arms behind their backs. Now Team Chaotix were powerless to do anything against the region. Vladek seemed to be enjoying cuffing the Chaotix up as he applied the laser cuffs onto them.

"I've been waiting nine years to say this Vector!" cackled Vladek "I'm arresting you on suspicion of treason against the Region of Rebellious Reptiles!"

"Oh can it umbrella neck!" snapped Vector "Deserting you jokers wasn't treasonous at all; it was the right thing to do! Pity you guys don't have the common sense I have!"

Diesel promptly punched Vector in the gut, heavily winding him and

making him hoarsely splutter. Being hit by a Komodo Dragon as powerful as Diesel was like getting hit by a rock. A VERY big rock that is.

"Bad mouth the region once more and Lord Sycorax will have you executed!" roared Diesel "Now keep quiet while we escort you three onto the ship!"

Romeo and Vladek pushed the Chaotix forward and led them to the centre of the battleship's shadow that blanketed everything below the ship in darkness. A teleporting beam fired down from the underbelly of the ship and hit the Chaotix, Romeo and Vladek. The moment the beam touched them, they were all transported up into the ship. Seeing as their mission was accomplished, all the soldiers, walker pods and dune buggies gathered around and waited to get beamed back up onto the ship. The teleporting beam fired down and expanded to the size of a large crater, beaming up all the soldiers and weapons back up onto the flagship. The moment everybody disappeared back onto the ship, the battleship's crocodile jaw like nose cone opened up, revealing a large Ion cannon inside its jaws. The cannon aimed down at the Chaotix Detective Agency's Office and fired a huge blast at the building. The Chaotix Detective Agency's Office was reduced to dust by the Ion blast. Once the Chaotix escaped, they would have to either rebuild the office or find a new place to stay. Now the office was destroyed, the Region of Rebellious Reptiles flagship turned around and slowly flew away, leaving Stardom Valley behind and heading for no particular direction…

Meanwhile, in the ship's cabin area, Lord Sycorax was looking at himself in the mirror and rehearsing on how he could possibly present himself to his long lost son. He was a bit of a perfectionist so how he presented himself must be perfect to him.

"Greetings son." he said to himself "At last we meet again!"

He then raised his arms up and stood in a position that suggested he was about to leap up behind something and yell "Ooga Booga!" just to scare them. The fearsome region leader shook his head

furiously and fumed at himself.

"No, no, no, no!" he grumbled "Too childish. Not to mention it doesn't sound quite right. Let's try again. Ahem…"

He stood to attention and put his arms behind his back like a portly gentleman standing to attention in a pleasing manner. He cleared his throat and said to himself in the mirror.

"Greetings son. We meet again at last."

He smiled so wide, his grin almost popped out the edges of his cheeks.

"Yes! That's it!" he said to himself "That's how I'll introduce myself! Greetings son. We meet again at…"

Something tapped him on the shoulder and he leaped in surprise. It was only Edward the Gecko, his messenger reptile. Lord Sycorax scowled at Edward.

"I wish you'd come at a time when I'm NOT staring at myself in the mirror!" snarled Lord Sycorax "You don't half irk me when you interrupt my crowing and rehearsing!"

"Sorry sir." croaked Edward in his strangled sounding voice "It's just that, I have good news for you."

"Let me guess, you found Vector and his friends, captured them and bought them onboard?" guessed Lord Sycorax.

"Good guess." said Edward "Because we have."

"Oh what serendipity!" cheered Lord Sycorax "We've found my wayward son at last! Now let's see if I can force him back onto the region's side and get the traitor to redeem himself. Where is my son?"

"He's in the main command centre awaiting your presence sir." croaked Edward.

"Excellent, you reptiles know how to plan in advance!" applauded

Lord Sycorax "Now let's see how Vector reacts to seeing his glorious father once again. If he's not happy then I'll MAKE him happy! Come along Edward."

Lord Sycorax left his cabin and Edward scuttled off after him. The two reptiles strode down the corridor and to the main command centre where the Chaotix were waiting for them. Lord Sycorax couldn't wait to see Vector again and he hoped Vector would be willing to comply to him this time…

As for the Chaotix, they had been dragged to the main command centre, the largest room on the ship mostly used for meetings. The room had a large window in the ceiling that gave anyone in the room a beautifully clear view of the sky above and the light of the outside shone through the window to light the room up. Vector, Espio and Charmy were down on their knees and forced to wait for Lord Sycorax to show up into the centre. Hordes of Reptile Rebels surrounded them, making an escape attempt impossible and the fact they were in laser cuffs made their escape all the more impossible. All the Chaotix could do now was kneel on the floor helplessly and wait for Lord Sycorax to show up. Vector and Espio kept their cool and didn't show any signs of fear whereas Charmy was having trouble controlling his emotions and looked clearly terrified.

"This is bad! We're prisoners of the reptile guys who work for Vector's evil dad!" he shrieked "I'm so scared I'm gonna go nuts right now!"

"Charmy, calm down!" snapped Vector "Getting scared is not gonna be of any good to us right now!"

Charmy ignored Vector and continued to freak out, shrieking at the top of his voice and shaking madly. The Reptile Rebels all seemed to be clearly annoyed with Charmy. They all frowned at the panicked bee and looked like they wanted to kill him right now.

"I wish we gagged that bee." muttered Vladek.

"He could do with a gag." agreed Romeo "That bee's annoying."

"Hey! Butt out you lame lizards!" snapped Charmy "Can't you see I'm freaking my heart out right now?"

"Charmy! SHUT UP!" bellowed Vector and Espio at the top of their voices.

Charmy did what he was told and he stopped panicking and he closed his mouth. He sat there on his knees and kept his mouth shut.

"Thank you." said Diesel crossly "They always say that bees are annoying and this one's of no exception."

"Diesel, do me a favour and leave my buddies alone." snapped Vector "I'm the one you're mad at, not them."

"You are in no position to order us around traitor since you don't work for the region anymore!" snapped Diesel "So you can shut up and know your place Vector!"

"You don't have to tell me twice jerk-head." muttered Vector quietly.

Then suddenly, the entire horde of Reptile Rebels turned to straight ahead of them and they all bowed down in respect, even Diesel, Romeo and Vladek. Vector knew what that meant. It meant that the lord was in the area and indeed he was. Lord Sycorax had arrived at the centre at last and he strode a prideful stride across the shiny floors and over to his prisoners. The reptiles stopped bowing and they all stood to attention, their eyes fixed squarely on the Chaotix and Lord Sycorax. The crocodile in the helmet and armour pieces stopped in front of the Chaotix, the latter glaring up at him, and he folded his arms behind his back and cleared his throat rather noisily.

"Greetings son." he said just like how he'd rehearsed earlier "We meet again at last."

"Don't call me son Lord Sycorax." muttered Vector "I'm no son of yours and you're no father of mine."

Lord Sycorax glared at Vector and somehow, managed to twist his long jaws into a sickly, devilish smile that would make any weak-minded person nervous.

"I'm so glad to see you too son." he sneered "After all these years, you still know how to greet us all properly."

The sarcasm in his voice was not very subtle at all.

"Ha, ha, ha, very freaking funny Sycorax." muttered Vector grumpily.

"I am LORD Sycorax to you and nothing less Vector!" snapped Lord Sycorax, pointing a finger the size of a hot-dog at Vector's face "You maybe Reptile Rebel no more but you still respect your superiors you wretched child!"

"OK news flash, I'm not a child anymore and if I'm not in the stinking region, I don't have any superiors!" retorted Vector "I know you're my dad so that technically means you're still my superior but you're no dad of mine in my books! You're just a big politic hating bully in my case and nothing more!"

Lord Sycorax bent down to Vector's kneeling height and snapped his jaws angrily at him, the snapping sound echoing ominously through the room after he made it. The snap cared Charmy more then anybody. Lord Sycorax then suddenly relaxed himself and raised himself up from Vector's face. He tried to smile evilly at him but the anger in his veins was preventing him from doing so.

"Scarcely appropriate behaviour to show in front of your buddies." he said mockingly "Wonder what they have to say about that appalling episode?"

"I say I'm glad Vector's doing this!" yelled Charmy "You're a bad guy and we don't talk nicely to bad guys!"

"Vector is not on your side anymore Sycorax so he can act how he likes!" growled Espio "All he's doing is pleasing me and Charmy by standing up to you!"

"It is… **LORD SYCORAX TO YOU!** " bellowed Lord Sycorax, bending over to Espio and yelling in the chameleon's face "LORD Sycorax! Not Sycorax! LORD Sycorax! And all standing up to me is going to do is ensure the chances of getting your necks broken so I would drop the valour if I were you!"

"Look, Syco boy, you don't scare us so stop trying to scare us!" snapped Vector.

"Well since I can't intimidate you in anyway I think I'll do just that." snapped Lord Sycorax, looking away from Espio and back over to Vector "And move onto some more seminal matters at hand right now."

"What do you want us for anyway?" asked Espio "Are you going to try and get Vector to join you guys again?"

"I am chameleon." said Lord Sycorax with a smile of death on his scaly face "And I might see if I can force you to join us since you're a reptile too. As for the bee, I'll let him off but he'd better shape up or else!"

Charmy gulped. Vector just gritted his teeth and made a grizzly frown on his face.

"Lord Sycorax, you can try all you like, I'm not joining up with you again!" yelled Vector "When I left you guys, I made it clear that I was leaving permanently and I was never coming back!"

"We'll see about that." muttered Lord Sycorax "No one says no to someone as devilishly handsome and powerful as myself and lives to tell the tale. While I think of a way to get you back into the region, you can do me a big favour Vector."

"What might that be then?" demanded Vector.

"Maybe you can tell us where Castle Acorn is so we can destroy it." said Lord Sycorax "Castle Acorn is one symbol of political stature I wish to get rid of."

"Why do you hate politics anyway?" asked Espio "Politics are important you know! Without it, we won't have world order and everything would be in chaos! We would act like savages and the world would be out of control!"

"I hate politics because they cause more harm than good." explained Lord Sycorax "Think about it, you have limits and laws and you have to do what the world leaders say because you have to

and you can't say no to them! Politics just hold us back and governments can become corrupt and make things worse so all I'm doing is doing the world a favour and getting rid of the one thing that's keeping us from freedom: politics! Once politics are dead, we won't have laws and limits and everything will be perfect!"

"No it won't dad!" retorted Vector "Laws keep things under control and stop people from doing bad things to each other and we need world orders to stop everybody going crazy! They aren't limiting us, they're doing what's right for everybody's sake! If you get rid of democracy and diplomacy forever, all you'll do is turn Mobius into an uncivilised society of chaos and mayhem! You're not doing the world a favour, you're destroying parliaments and governments for your own selfish needs, not caring what we all need and trying to make the world a terrible place!"

Lord Sycorax was so furious with Vector's back chatting he backhanded Vector straight into a wall on the other side of the room. Vector crashed into the wall and slumped on the floor, leaving a huge dent behind. Funny how is punches seemed to be more powerful then before, he didn't remember his dad being that strong before. Lord Sycorax's red eyes were glowing redder then ever in rage and he clenched his teeth so hard, they looked like they would crack under the heavy strain they were put under.

"How lost and misled you are Vector!" roared Lord Sycorax "You simply fail to realize that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few! We are the many and the parliaments are the few so our needs outweigh their flaccid needs! We don't need them and once I purge the world of policy, I will show you how much better Mobius will be without democracy! Romeo, take those three to the detention cells! I've had enough of them! Keep them locked up until I've calmed down!"

"Yes sir, Lord Sycorax sir." said Romeo politely.

He yanked Espio and Charmy onto their feet and he led them out of the main command centre. Diesel hauled Vector onto his feet and pushed him after Romeo. Vector just followed Romeo, keeping his vision fixed ahead of him and away from Lord Sycorax. How he hated his father now, such a misguided wreck of a lord with an

incurably evil desire. Vector felt like he wanted to kill Lord Sycorax now but that would make him no better then him so he reluctantly decided against it. Romeo led the Chaotix out of the room and down a dark corridor to the detention cells. Lord Sycorax watched angrily as Team Chaotix were escorted out of the room and to the detention cells. He turned around and strode out of the main command centre.

"You're all dismissed." he said as he left the room.

The Reptile Rebels all obeyed and they left the room. As Lord Sycorax headed back to his cabin, he couldn't get Vector's poisonous remark out of his head.

" *You're not doing the world a favour, you're destroying parliaments and governments for your own selfish needs, not caring what we all need and trying to make the world a terrible place!* "

The very words "trying to make the world a terrible place" particularly echoed through his skull like a long ominous gong ring that just wouldn't go away. Lord Sycorax stormed into his cabin and he punched his beloved mirror angrily, not caring about the fact he just broke it to pieces and he growled loudly.

"Trying to make the world a terrible place am I?" he snorted "I'll show that oaf of a leather sack I have the nerve to call my son! Once I rid the world of diplomacy, we will be free from their evil and Vector will see how wrong he was about me and my radiant region! I will get him back into the region even if I have to tear my own limbs off trying!"

That would have to wait though as he needed a good cool off before meeting Vector again. While he cooled off, he began to rack his brain for a way to convince Vector to come back to him. It wouldn't be an easy process but he was determined to try, even if it took him the rest of his life to finally succeed…

In the detention cells, Vector, Espio and Charmy had been freed from their laser cuffs and thrown into a cell (and wouldn't you know it? They were the only prisoners in the entire blockade!). The cell

was dull and featureless with four blandly coloured walls and a glass door. Romeo locked the cell and glared icily at his prisoners.

"I hope you enjoy your stay here rebels!" he snarled "Because Lord Sycorax maybe in his cabin trying to cool off for a very, VERY long time!"

And with that, the red skinned chameleon left the blockade and headed back off to his cabin, leaving Team Chaotix alone in the cell together. Charmy wrapped his arms around his legs and curled up into a ball. He didn't like being trapped or locked up.

"Oh man! I hate being in a prison cell!" he moaned "It's scary and lonely in one! I hope the room doesn't fill up with oil like that prison cell on that oil rig thingy* we were on before!"

"Nah it won't Charmy." said Vector "I remember these cells as if I'd only been in them yesterday, they're just bland, featureless cells with nothing whatsoever. No wonder the prisoners got bored out of their minds in here. Good thing I still have my earphones so I can listen to a tune or two while I'm waiting for ol' Syco to show his ugly face to us again."

He pointed to his trademark earphones which he was always listening too, even if it didn't look like it.

"You won't need to wait for Sycorax to show up because we'll be gone before then." said Espio "Now my hands are free, I can use my shuriken to get us out of here."

"Of course!" cried Vector, clapping himself on the head "Your shuriken can get us out of here! I'm not sure how strong the glass is but I'm sure your shuriken will break the door to pieces!"

Espio nodded and he drew a shuriken out of airspace (he can do that just like how Amy pulls her hammers out of airspace). He threw the shuriken at the door but unfortunately, the shuriken ricocheted off the door and hurtled back towards Espio. Espio ducked, leaving the shuriken to embed itself into the wall at the back of the cell. Espio pulled the shuriken out of the wall and fumed.

"That door has thick glass it seems." he muttered "I can't shatter it with the shuriken. I'll have to bomb it down with it instead."

"Um Espio? I don't think that's a good idea in a small space like this!" shrieked Vector, sweat-dropping a little.

Espio ignored him and he threw the shuriken at the foot of the glass door. The shuriken embedded itself into the floor at the foot of the glass door. The shuriken then exploded, filling the cell with smoke and leaving the Chaotix blackened a little. But to Espio's dismay, even the exploding shuriken didn't break the door! The door was still intact as if nothing had happened! The Chaotix couldn't believe their eyes.

"How did that glass door survive that explosion?" cried Espio.

"It must be Diamond Glass or something like that!" blurted Vector "Only Diamond Glass can survive an explosion as big as this!"

"Well that's just flowers and honey!" muttered Charmy, folding his arms and pouting like a kid who's just been told he can't have any sweets "How can we get out of here now?"

"I'll cut our way out." said Espio, drawing out another shuriken "Diamond Glass can't be shattered but it can be cut. I'll just cut a neat little circle into the door and we'll be free."

He marched over to the door and hit it with the shuriken as hard as he could. He then drew a large circle on the door with the shuriken, making a horrible screeching noise as he did so. Vector and Charmy held their ears as Espio drew the circle. The glass door now had a neat circle carved into it. Not even Diamond Glass could stand up to the sharpness of Espio's shuriken. Espio flicked the circle and the huge glass chunk fell out of the door and landed with a clunk on the floor but it didn't smash to pieces being as it was a tough glass. Now the door had a hole in it, the Chaotix stepped out through the hole and out of the cell. They were free and now all they had to do was get off the ship and make a run for it before Lord Sycorax could catch them.

"Now we're out, what do we do now?" asked Charmy.

"Get off this joint." said Vector "How, I dunno. But we will get off somehow."

"We'll have to be careful around this ship as there are bound to be reptiles everywhere." noted Espio "As strong as we are, we won't be able to beat them all."

"I agree." said Vector "Keep quiet you two and look for a way off of this ship."

"Roger." said Espio.

"OK." said Charmy with a wide, childish grin on his face.

The Chaotix crept out of the detention cell blockade and into the dark corridor outside. They crept as silent as mice through the dark corridor and they found the door that led to the room outside the prison blockade. Vector pushed the button and the door opened… revealing Diesel the Komodo Dragon standing outside of it with his back turned on them! Diesel heard the door open up behind him and he turned around to see that the Chaotix had escaped their cell.

"What? How did you manage to escape your cell?" cried Diesel

Vector just clapped on Diesel's head with his hands, making him go all dopey side on them and causing him to collapse onto the floor in a daze. In order to hide themselves, Vector and Espio dragged the unconscious Diesel over to an empty cell and they tossed him inside. Espio locked the door, trapping Diesel inside the cell and preventing him from being a problem for them. Now the coast was clear, Team Chaotix left the cell blockade and they crept down a large hallway that stretched for miles around the ship.

"So Vector? What do we do now?" asked Charmy "How do we get off this joint?"

"Despite being away from this ship for nine years, I remember the way around as if I'd just walked it yesterday." said Vector "Our best chance of escape would be to go to the main hangar bay, get one of those dune-buggies and blast our way through the walls and to freedom."

"Vector, that's a crazy idea!" blurted Espio "We're presumably thousands of feet above ground! We'll fall to our deaths if we do that!"

"Ehk, wrong!" said Vector "The Reptile Rebel Buggies are actually able to fly. They have built in wings and jet packs that unfold at the touch of a button."

"Wow, that's cool!" said Charmy excitedly.

"I know." said Vector "The region has a lot of cool tech and I'm gonna use it to escape from them."

"How do we get to the main hangar bay?" asked Espio.

"If I remember correctly, there's a ventilation shaft that leads to the bay somewhere around here." said Vector, bending down and scanning the foot of the walls to see if he could find a grate of any kind "I'm not exactly sure though."

"Oh that's helpful." muttered Charmy sarcastically.

The bee leaned against the wall and watched as Vector looked for a vent shaft. But when Charmy leaned against the wall, he suddenly fell through it! He cried out in surprise as he found himself tumbling through the wall. Espio looked at the wall and noticed that the wall actually had an opening hatch on it. The hatch said "Emergency hatch, only use when alarms are on".

"Hey Vector, what's this shaft all about?" asked Espio.

Vector stopped nosing around the foot of the walls and looked at what Espio was looking at. He saw the shaft that Charmy had fallen through, the bee poking his head out and shaking himself off. Vector's memory ticked as he remembered something.

"Oh that's an emergency hatch." he said "When the alarms go off and everybody has to go to the main hangar bay, people on these floors use these hatches as shortcuts. These hatches are everywhere on the ship."

"Well let's go down it then." said Espio "We need to get down to the

hangar bay for your plan."

With that said, Charmy let go of the hatch and slid down the shaft, going "Wheeeeee!" as he did so. Vector and Espio climbed into the hatch one at once and they slid down the shaft. They weren't sliding for long as the whole thing was a very quick slide down and before they knew it, they were all at the bottom in a matter of seconds. The Chaotix all slid out through a hatch and they all landed in a heap on their backs on top of one another with Espio and Charmy unfortunate enough to be underneath the lumbering bulk that is Vector the Crocodile. The bee and chameleon though they were going to suffocate if Vector didn't move off of them. Vector realized that his pals were underneath him so he got up onto his feet. Espio and Charmy picked themselves up and they surveyed their surroundings. They were in a large room that expanded for meters around them and the room was full of the weapons tech they had seen after being captured by the Reptile Rebels. The dune buggies with heavy weaponry and the walker bots with Gatling guns that the region had brought to make them surrender were all in the room offline and awaiting usage. There were variants on the walker bots in the room too. Some had four legs and cannons on either side, some were smaller then the common two legged walkers and some had two legs and four Gatling Guns instead of two. There were variants on the dune buggies as well with some being heavier armed then the others. There were also a few fighter jets which were vaguely reptilian shaped. Their metal armour was coated with a reptile-like deco and their wings had claw shapes at the tips. The Rebellious Reptile Region liked a lot of things to be in their image, especially weapons. Vector remembered this place as if he'd only been in it a few hours ago.

"This is the place." said Vector "The main hangar bay. Now all we have to do is steal a dune buggy and blast our way through the walls and we'll be flying to freedom."

"What shall we do once we escape?" asked Espio "I mean, those Reptile Rebels will just hunt us down."

"We'll call the Royal Fighters and they'll help us defeat these guys and send them packing." said Vector as he, Espio and Charmy headed over to the nearest buggy "Sonic will make mincemeat out

of these lizard heads."

"I know he will." said Charmy with a gormless grin on his face.

Vector, Espio and Charmy all nabbed the first buggy they came across and they climbed into it. The buggies were relatively small inside but they had enough room for at least four people inside. Vector took up a lot of room in the buggy due to his size and he found himself feeling rather uncomfortable. Espio sat beside him and Charmy sat in the back seat. Vector gripped the steering wheel and racked his brain to see if he could remember how to work these buggies. He had been given practice in driving one around the age of ten but that was about it. He hadn't really had much practice in driving one of the buggies, let alone flying one.

"Vector, you do know how to drive this thing don't you?" asked Espio worriedly.

"Um…sure I do." lied Vector, sweat dropping nervously "Let's see here…"

He pressed the starter button beside the steering wheel and the buggy roared a tremendous dinosaur-style roar that made Espio jump and make Charmy almost jump out of his skin.

"Oh, sorry, they always do that." said Vector "Now how do I work this thing…"

He pushed on the accelerator and the buggy drove forward and bumped into the back of the buggy in front of it. Vector then reversed and the buggy drove backwards and crashed into the buggy behind it. The buggy in front had a crushed boot and the bonnet of the buggy behind was completely smashed due to Vector's clumsy driving. Vector turned the steering wheel to one side and he drove out of the line of buggies. He drove slowly, making sure he didn't crash into anything. He steered the buggy away from the lines of weapons tech and he drove up to the wall.

"This is weird, I can drive a hover car and a speedboat alright but driving this thing makes me feel nervous." said Vector to himself "Now how do I work the weapons?"

"I don't think he knows what he's doing." Charmy whispered to Espio with a smirk.

"Shut up Charmy!" snapped Vector "I do know what I'm doing, I just need a couple of memory jogs because I haven't really had much driving practice with these!"

While he ranted at Charmy, he accidentally pressed a button in the middle of the steering wheel and the buggy's guns suddenly began shooting at the wall. Vector cried out in surprise as the heavy guns the buggy was equipped with suddenly began shooting at the wall. Bullets ripped their way effortlessly through the tough steel the battleship was made of. The wall was soon getting pepper-potted by the guns and Vector had no idea how to control the weapons. Unfortunately, the loud sound of the guns caught the attention of Vladek and Romeo, who were both coincidentally near the hangar bay at the time. They heard the gunfire and they ran into the room, only to see a dune-buggy shooting at the wall. They couldn't see the Chaotix in the buggy so they just assumed it was anybody.

"Oy! You!" yelled Vladek "Get out of that buggy you trigger happy lunatic!"

The frill-necked lizard bent down on all fours and charged towards the buggy. The buggy had shot the wall so many times the section that had been pepper-potted by bullets looked weak and fragile now. The section had been heavily damaged by the relentless onslaught of the buggy's incredible weaponry. Vector pressed the button in the middle of the steering wheel and stopped the guns from firing. Vladek pounced on the buggy and he peered into the exterior of the buggy. His tail straightened in surprise and he raised his frill.

"Impossible! You three should be imprisoned!" choked Vladek.

Espio just lashed out and socked Vladek in the face, knocking him clean off the buggy's roof and onto the floor. Romeo ran over to help Vladek. Vector thought fast and pressed a button on the steering column. Out from under the buggy, wings extended and jet fumes extended out from the back of the buggy. The buggy was in flight mode. Vector pushed on the accelerator and the buggy's jet's activated. Fumes roared out from the jet packs and the buggy shot

forward, blowing Vladek and Romeo away and crashing through the weakened section of wall which had been pepper-potted by the guns. The buggy crashed straight through the wall and plummeted straight down to the ground far below. Vector, Espio and Charmy screamed at the top of their voices as they fell straight down to the ground. Desperate to save himself, Vector decided to quickly try every control on the column to see which one would stabilize the buggy and make it fly. None of the buttons seemed to work so Vector pulled the clutch beside his leg. He pulled the clutch towards himself and the buggy stopped plummeting and began to pull upwards. The whole thing was now fully stabilized and it was flying straight through the air like a plane. Romeo and Vladek watched the dune buggy fly away and they immediately panicked. Romeo reached into his pocket and yanked his comlink out, ripping his pocket due to how fast he did it. He frantically yelled into the comlink.

"Lord Sycorax! The Chaotix have escaped and are fleeing in a dune buggy!"

Lord Sycorax suddenly made a horrible, gagging and gargling sound that sounded like he was being strangled. He was so shocked at the news he could hardly breathe. He quickly regained himself bellowed at Romeo.

"YOU INCOMPETENT IMBECILE! YOU WILL BE SEVERELY DEMOTED FOR THIS!"

"But it wasn't my fault sir!" protested Romeo.

"Shut up and go to your cabin Romeo!" snarled Lord Sycorax "I will catch those pests!"

Romeo pouted to himself and he put his comlink away but his pocket was ripped so it dropped onto the floor instead. Romeo and Vladek left the hangar bay and they headed back to their cabins.

In the cockpit, Lord Sycorax could see the flying dune buggy and he locked onto its coordinates.

"You're gonna have to try harder then that if you want to escape me

Vector!" sneered Lord Sycorax, pressing a button on the control pad.

The flagship's cannons aimed at the dune buggy and locked on target. One of the cannons fired and a huge energy blast shot towards the flying dune buggy. Vector heard the shot coming and he tried to steer the buggy out of the way but it was too late, the blast tore off the buggy's left wing and sent it spiralling out of control. The buggy began to spiral down to the ground. Vector fought hard on the controls but try as he may, he couldn't get the buggy back under control, it needed two wings to fly and it had just lost one so it couldn't fly properly. Charmy, desperate to live, flew out of the buggy but before he could flee for it, he had an idea. Why didn't they think of this before? Charmy flew back to the buggy and grabbed Espio by the arms. Vector grabbed Espio's legs and the bee carried them both out of the falling buggy. The buggy plummeted down to earth and crashed onto the ground with a deafening smash. The buggy exploded into debris and shrapnel and burst into flames down below. Charmy, Espio and Vector looked at the flaming wreck of the buggy and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Boy was that close!" said Charmy "We could have been dead down there!"

"Why didn't I think of doing this before?" asked Vector "We should have just used the buggy to blast our way out and then Charmy fly us down! I could have saved us a whole lot of trouble!"

"Yes, you could have." said Espio "From now on, I am never going to call Charmy an idiot, except when he's acting like one."

Charmy beamed happily as he buzzed down to the ground. He and the Chaotix gently touched down onto the ground and their tower of three collapsed into just the three of them. Now they were safe on the ground, they broke into a run and ran for their lives before the region could hope to catch up to them. Unfortunately, they didn't get very far. Lord Sycorax had flown out of the cockpit and was heading towards the ground at high speed! The two structures on his armour behind his head were really jets that he could use to fly through the sky. Vector, Espio and Charmy stopped running and they turned around to see Lord Sycorax flying towards them faster then a

Peregrine Falcon. He drew his arm back, turned off his jets and hurtled towards the Chaotix. The Chaotix dived for cover as Lord Sycorax landed on the ground and punched it. He made a small crater the size of a small swimming pool and caused a massive shockwave that swept Vector, Espio and Charmy off their feet. They all landed onto the ground and rolled across it before coming to a halt a few feet away from the insidious democracy despiser. Lord Sycorax stood up after that incredible punch and he turned around to see his downed victims. His wide jaws spread out into a evil, toothy grin that could rival a dragon's grin.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" he cackled "As I thought, I take you all out before the fight can even begin! Now if you'll just be good boys and wait there, I'll beam you back onto the ship in no time."

"I'd rather eat my internal organs then go back on your ship Sycorax!" yelled Vector in a grizzly tone "Espio, get him!"

"Roger." said Espio, charging towards Lord Sycorax at ninja speed.

Lord Sycorax just stood there and waited for Espio to come to him as if he wasn't even bothered about fighting. Espio jumped into the air, drew his arm back and hurtled towards Lord Sycorax. Lord Sycorax lashed out and grabbed Espio before the ninja chameleon's leap could even finish and he spun around in a circle. Lord Sycorax spun around twice and then threw Espio towards Vector. Espio hurtled through the air like a tossed stone and he crashed head first in front of Vector. The chameleon ended up getting a face full of dirt. Charmy got mad and he charged towards Lord Sycorax like a bee that's trying to sting somebody for stealing his honey. Lord Sycorax lunged into the air, clasped his fists together and fist-slammed Charmy in the back of the head, sending him hurtling into the ground faster then a falling star. Charmy hit the ground harder then a falling brick and he groaned in pain. Lord Sycorax then added insult to injury by landing on top of Charmy with an elbow slam to the back. Sycorax's elbows were like dropping a weight on your back. Charmy wheezed hoarsely and he almost passed out. He felt too weak to so much as buzz his wings or even twitch his antennae. Espio picked himself up and threw a shuriken at Lord Sycorax. Lord Sycorax deflected the blow with his arm-mounted armour pieces and he charged towards Espio. Espio was too slow to react and Lord

Sycorax rammed him with his shoulder. Espio hurtled backwards and landed on his back. Vector could see that he needed to get into the fray and fast. He crackled his knuckles and he ran towards Lord Sycorax. He opened his mouth, roared at the top of his voice and prepared to give Lord Sycorax some more scars on his arm. Lord Sycorax however just suddenly lashed out and grabbed Vector by the neck. Vector's roar died down into a gag as Lord Sycorax hoisted Vector up to his height. Vector struggled in his father's grasp and Lord Sycorax grinned a grin so evil, not even the devil himself could grin more evilly.

"As I was saying, you'll be beamed back onto the ship in no time." said Lord Sycorax evilly.

"Ugh! Ack! Never!" cried Vector "Let me go!"

"Why? You'll just run away and abandon your poor, glorious father again." sneered Lord Sycorax.

"You are not my father!" gagged Vector "I made that clear already! I am not your son and you are not my father!"

"Wrong Vector." said Lord Sycorax "You just can't bear to call yourself my son that's all. Well your words mean as much to me as a killer toothache so I don't care what you say."

Espio and Charmy weakly picked themselves up and saw that their boss and friend was in trouble. Espio deployed a pair of shuriken and prepared to throw them and Charmy prepared to attack Lord Sycorax. Lord Sycorax shot them a devilish glare.

"If you two take so much as one step, Vector will end up finding out what his internal organs look like!" snarled Lord Sycorax.

Espio and Charmy reluctantly stood down, seeing as Lord Sycorax was clearly on top here and they wouldn't be able to help Vector at all. Vector continued squirming in Sycorax's grasp and the evil crocodile jammed his scaly face into Vector's scaly face.

"Now Vector, you have two choices." growled Lord Sycorax "Either you and your friends can join the region and help me destroy more

parliaments or I can snap you like a spinal cord and believe me, I have the strength to do so you treacherous arm-biting wretch!"

He tightened his iron grip on Vector's throat, almost suffocating the poor crocodile. Vector began to sweat madly as Lord Sycorax's grip tightened on his neck. Vector really didn't want to rejoin the despicable region but he didn't want to die either. Besides, it didn't matter if he rejoined the region, he could just find a way to desert them again or he could hope that Sonic would stomp on them all and free him from his father's hold. As reluctant as Vector was, he decided to take the first option seeing as how it would be better to delay his escape time for awhile rather then die right now.

"I…gack!...choose…ack!...to join…you guys again! hurk!" choked Vector.

"Vector! No!" cried Espio.

"Don't join your mean daddy Vector!" whined Charmy.

"SILENCE!" roared Lord Sycorax "Vector's mind is made up and he wishes to join us again. You two are mine as well as he agreed that you two can join as well as him."

"NO!" cried Espio.

"Why am I joining? I'm not a reptile." noted Charmy.

"You'll be useful." said Lord Sycorax, putting Vector down and letting go of his neck "Now Vector, the first thing you can do for me to redeem yourself for your treachery is tell me where Castle Acorn is."

Vector rubbed his neck and coughed heavily. He looked sadly at Espio and Charmy. Espio and Charmy could only look sadly back at him. Vector felt like he was REALLY going to regret this but he had no choice. His life was in danger and so where Espio and Charmy's if he didn't comply to them. Vector sighed and turned back to Lord Sycorax.

"Dad, Castle Acorn is in…"

Vector pulled Lord Sycorax close to him and whispered into his ear.

He couldn't bear to let Espio and Charmy hear him betray the Kingdom of Acorn so he whispered it to Lord Sycorax instead of saying it to him. All Lord Sycorax did after Vector told him what he wanted to know was grin like a hungry crocodile. He knew where Castle Acorn was now and he could now destroy it along with all the other governments he'd destroyed in the past…

"Good afternoon Sally." said Nicole the Lynx, the Acorn family's beautiful lady-in-waiting as Queen Sally Acorn returned to the castle once again "How was your walk?"

"Beautiful with a big "B" Nicole." said Sally happily "Green Hill Zone is such a gorgeous place to walk in. The smells, the sights, the peace, everything is wonderful. It feels good to get out of the castle every one in a while and stretch my legs."

Queen Sally had just been on a leisurely stroll through Green Hill Zone and now she had returned to her glamorous home, Castle Acorn to rest. She was wearing a different attire right now. She was only wearing a blue vest and blue boots as this outfit was better suited to walks in the woods and she didn't want to get her fabulous dresses dirty.

"Have you had any updates from Sonic, Tails and Amy at all?" asked Sally.

"Yes." said Nicole "Apparently, last night they just destroyed Metal Sonic** who turned out to be alive even though it was speculated he was destroyed after a mission in Robotropolis the other month***."

"Metal Sonic was still alive?" mused Sally "Well thank goodness he's destroyed now. He was bad enough as he was, being able to fend of fifteen of us and still come out on top."

"I know Sally." said Nicole "I'm not sure what they're doing right now as I haven't had a call from them at all today. I'm sure they're just having a chill out with the Northern Royal Fighters or something."

"Well when you're with Miranda Mongoose and her team, you can

expect a good time from them." said Sally "So good a time, you may forget to give your friends back home updates…"

She was suddenly interrupted by the sound of a battleship coming towards Castle Acorn. Sally's heart sank and her ears widened in shock. Nicole heard the sound too and began to wonder what was going on.

"What was that?" asked Nicole.

"Dr. Eggman?" worried Sally "Probably. Let's see."

Sally and Nicole ran through the doors and outside into the open. The first thing they saw was a huge ship shaped vaguely like a crocodile armed with cannons and it looked very deadly. The ship seemed to have a horrific effect on Sally as all she could was gasp in horror.

"No…No…No!" she gasped "Not…Not the Region of Rebellious Reptiles!"

Her worst fears had come true as the Region of Rebellious Reptiles flagship loomed above Castle Acorn, waiting to fire at it and completely destroy it along with all the other political landmarks it had destroyed in the region's entire run…

Footnotes:

*** See *STH: HOM* Story 64**

**** See *STH: HOM* Story 70**

***** See *STH: HOM* Story 51**

Well things didn't go well at all did they? Vector's back in the region and Castle Acorn is about to become a memory of the past! Can Vector escape his father's evil claws or is he going to be permenantly stuck on the region's side? Read and Review.

P.S. Lord Sycorax is a douche lord! XD

Rebellious Reptiles 3

Arc 7: Rebellious Reptiles

Takes place during stories 70-72 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 3: Reptiles in Mobotropolis

The enormous flagship of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles loomed above Castle Acorn ominously like a bird of prey waiting to swoop down and snatch its victim with its razor sharp talons. Lord Sycorax, the leader of the region, admired Castle Acorn through the cockpit window. His scaly face widened in a twisted evil grin. After all these years, he'd finally found Castle Acorn and now he could destroyed it along with all the other political landmarks he'd destroyed before. As Lord Sycorax admired Castle Acorn, Vector the Crocodile stared glumly at the floor. Lord Sycorax had forced him into revealing Castle Acorn's location and because of him; Castle Acorn would be destroyed unless Sonic and friends could do anything about it. The crocodile was clearly not pleased with himself. His friends Espio the Chameleon and Charmy Bee were just as sad as he was. Their boss and friend was going to be the cause of Castle Acorn's destruction. Lord Sycorax stopped admiring Castle Acorn and he purred to himself.

"Such a beautiful landmark." he said "I almost fail ashamed I have to destroy it. Well, it's like I say. Politics must be purged for the greater good."

Vector resisted the urge to retort to his father, knowing that it would be suicide as Lord Sycorax was too powerful for even him and his team mates.

"I always thought Castle Acorn was going to be grand looking." said Lord Sycorax "And now, it won't be so grand looking."

He pressed a button on the control pad that switched all the speakers on and he spoke into the microphone on the pad.

"Attention all reptiles!" he boomed into the microphone "We have finally found Castle Acorn! You know the drill, get to your vehicles, get your weapons, get everything you need! Get down there and turn this political landmark into a political wreckage! Let the operation…COMMENCE!"

The entire flagship seemed to explode into frenzy. The reptiles all ran around like school kids swarming out of the school at home time. Romeo the Chameleon and Vladek the Frill Necked-Lizard left their head quarters and Diesel the Komodo Dragon, who managed to get out of the cell the Chaotix had trapped him in after Edward the Gecko found him and released him, ran for the emergency hatches and he slid down one to the hangar bay. All the reptiles on the ship went into the hangar bay and picked whatever weapons tech they came across. Some chose the walked drones, some chose the dune buggies and some chose the jets. When the Region of Rebellious Reptiles was in flat out rebel mode, they literally used as many weapons as they possibly could. It may seem over the top but let's face it, the region IS over the top! The ship's cargo bay opened up and the vehicles, which all had a pilot in them, all drove through the door and flew out into the open air. The jets and dune buggies as we already know, could fly and the walker drones had flying capabilities via jet fumes under the feet to they wouldn't drop down to the ground and crash. Romeo and Vladek were in dune buggies and Diesel was in a heavy unit class of walker drone, the kind with the cannons instead of Gatling guns. They all flew down to the ground, ready to unleash hell on their target. Lord Sycorax watched with glee as his entire region was in attack mode. Vector kept his back turned on his dad, unable to watch what was going become of Castle Acorn down below. Vector then suddenly thought of something. If there was a leftover weapon of any kind, he could use it to fight off the region! After all, he only joined up to save his life and was waiting for an opportunity to flee for it. And now an opportunity presented itself.

"Um…dad?" asked Vector nervously "Can me, Espio and Charmy help the others destroy Castle Acorn?"

Lord Sycorax turned around and stared at Vector as if he'd just said a very offensive remark.

"Do you really think I was born in Idiot Swap Vector?" snapped Lord

Sycorax "You may have joined us again but I still don't fully trust you son, so you will stay here where I can keep a close eye on you. And don't even think of trying to escape the cockpit, it's entirely in lockdown. No one can get in or out of here now."

"Well that's silly! How can you get down there and help your buddies then?" asked Charmy.

"You'll see bee." sneered Lord Sycorax "This brilliant crocodile has a lot of tricks hidden in his jaws."

"Your jaws? Silly place to hide a trick." muttered Charmy.

"Charmy, don't try to upset him." muttered Espio.

Lord Sycorax ignored Charmy's remark and he turned back to the window where he could see the whole region lining up down on the ground, ready to cut loose on Castle Acorn.

"I bet I'm going to get a resistance of some kind." he said to himself "I wouldn't be too surprised if that so-called Hero of Mobius is down there plotting to stop me. What was his name again? Speedy the Hedgehog? Um…Swifty the Hedgehog? Nah uh…Fast the Hedgehog? Um…"

"Sonic the Hedgehog." corrected Vector.

"Thank you." said Lord Sycorax without even turning around "I wouldn't be too surprised if Sonic the Hedgehog is down there. Oh well, not even he will be a match for me."

"So you think." muttered Vector under his breath.

"Excuse me?" snarled Lord Sycorax.

He had excellent hearing so even a whisper wouldn't go unheard to him.

"I-I-I mean yes dad, not even Sonic can stop you." lied Vector, wanting to punch himself for saying that.

"That's what I thought you said." sniffed Lord Sycorax "Now where

was I? Oh yes, I bet Sonic the Hedgehog and them Royal Fighter twerps are going to put up a resistance. Well this resistance will be too busy dealing with my troops down below to worry about this beauty of a ship. While my troops deal with the worms down below, I will be readying this ship for the killer blow. Once the Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon is primed and ready, I will fire it at Castle Acorn and destroy it in one fell swoop!"

Thank you very much for that handy hint doofus! sneered Vector in his mind *Now you're giving me an idea on how to stop your plans!*

That was Lord Sycorax's biggest problem, he never EVER shuts up! He was such an egotist and such a bragger that he often talked the ears of an elephant to himself. He was so busy boasting, he failed to realize Vector had been listening to him. Not that he cared since he was certain the Chaotix were trapped like rats in the cockpit with him so revealing his plan wasn't really going to be of much help to the Chaotix since they can't escape. Nevertheless, Vector was sure he could find a way out of the cockpit and then be able to stop the Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon from firing. Once that weapon was down, the flagship wouldn't be able to destroy Castle Acorn so easily. The only problem was…how can he stop it? Lord Sycorax pulled a lever on the control pad. The ship made a loud whirring noise that suggested something was beginning to power up.

"The Ion Cannon is readying." purred Lord Sycorax "In twenty minutes, it'll be ready to fire…"

And in those twenty minutes, the region would be fending off whatever resistance there was, keeping them at bay and stopping them from getting to the ship. Once the weapon was ready, Castle Acorn would be reduced to dust…

Down below, Queen Sally Acorn and her lady-in-waiting Nicole the Lynx watched as the region lined up in their dune-buggies, walker drones and jets. Sally could only watch in horror as the region advanced on Castle Acorn.

"I hoped this day would never come." said Sally in a horror-stricken

tone "The day the Region of Rebellious Reptiles would find this place and try to destroy it."

"What is the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and how do you know about it?" asked Nicole suspiciously.

"Every political person knows what the region is." explained Sally "I learnt about them from my father. According to him, the Region of Rebellious Reptiles is what it's name implies, a region of rebellious reptiles. These reptiles gather up and go around destroying parliaments and political landmarks because they hate democracy. They're often called the "Despisers of Democracy", the "Purges of Politics" and the "Pulverizes of Parliaments". My dad gave me pictures of their flagship so should the region ever attack; I'd know who it was. I've lived in fear of them ever finding Castle Acorn and attacking it…and now my worst fears have come true!"

"And at such an inconvenient moment too." muttered Nicole "Sonic's in Nekronopolis right now. We can't call him back as he's probably doing something with the Northern Royal Fighters right now."

"Then we'll just have to use whatever we have." said Sally "We still have our best Royal Fighters. I'll go get them and then we'll fight of the region and defend this castle, in the name of the king and queen before me and for the people of Mobotropolis!"

"That's what I love to hear." said Nicole "I'll be joining in with this resistance myself." she added, cracking her knuckles.

"And so will I." said Sally "No way am I going to stay out of this one and do nothing! This is my kingdom and I'll defend it, even from those reptile monsters on my doorstep!"

With that said, Sally ran over to Royal HQ which was just a few paces away from Castle Acorn. The moment she arrived at the headquarters, the Royal Fighters burst out and stared up at the Reptile Rebel's flagship. There was, of course, Geoffrey St. John the Skunk, Bunnie Rabbot, Wilson the Dog, Mandy Mouse, Ruben the Water Panther and Cosmo the Seedrian. Cream the Rabbit was still in Knothole right now so she wasn't here. The Royal Fighters had picked up the flagship on the computer monitors in the lab and they

stared up in disbelief at the amazing crocodilian-esque ship that loomed above Mobotropolis.

"Crikey now that's a big-un!" blurted Geoffrey.

"Who's ship is this?" asked Wilson "It can't be Eggman's, that doesn't look like his usual design of battleship."

"That's because it isn't." said Sally, catching the Royal Fighter's attention "That ship belongs to the Region of Rebellious Reptiles. They rebel against anything and they hate democracy so they'll destroy anything political."

"No prizes for guessing these jerks are here to destroy Castle Acorn." muttered Mandy crossly "Does anybody ever leave that castle alone?"

"Sadly no." said Sally "But we can't let those reptiles destroy my home. Are you willing to help me defeat them all?"

"Do you even need to ask?" sneered Geoffrey, arming his trademark arm-mounted crossbow "We'll send these rebelling blokes back where they came from!"

"Are you sure we'll do so well without Sonic, Tails and Amy?" wondered Ruben "They're excellent fighters and they could help us out dearly in this situation. Sonic in particular."

"As much as I agree with you Ruben mate, we can't keep relying on Sonic all the time." noted Geoffrey "We have to take matters into our own hands when the speedy bloke's not here."

"Ah'll fight mah hardest!" declared Bunnie "No ugly reptile is destroying Castle Acorn on mah watch!"

Sally smiled at the determined faces of the Royal Fighters.

"Then let's get started." said Sally "Bunnie, you're the only one who can fly. You fly up there and stop the battleship before the region can use it. We'll take out the ground forces."

"Will do sugah." said Bunnie with a brave smile and a wink of the

eye.

Bunnie activated the jets in her roboticized feet and the cyborg rabbit flew up to the crocodilian-esque battleship that threatened to destroy Castle Acorn with one blast of its weapons. As for Sally, Nicole, Geoffrey, Wilson, Mandy and Ruben, they all charged over to the advancing reptiles, ready to do battle. Cosmo just stayed in Royal HQ for safety, seeing as how she would be of no help to anybody in this battle. Diesel could see the resistance coming towards him and his troops from his giant walker drone and he smiled a big toothy smile to himself.

"Oh look, a pitiful resistance from the R.F.S.!" he crowed "How quaint! Region, kill them all!" he bellowed.

The reptiles obeyed and they opened fired with the weapons on their vehicles. The dune buggies and walker drones all showered the Royal Fighters with laser blasts and bullets. Ruben the Water Panther aimed his hands at the ground and shot himself into the air with a jet of water, dodging all their attacks and then he aimed his hands at Diesel's walker-drone. Diesel aimed the walker-drone's cannons at Ruben and tried to blast him but he missed as Ruben hurtled towards him and Ruben showered the walker drone with a gush of water out of his hands. The walker-drone was completely drenched by the water panther's attack and Diesel was soaking wet. Ruben landed on the drone and kung-fu punched Diesel in the snout. Diesel retaliated with a punch of his own and Ruben was sent hurling onto the back of a dune-buggy. Diesel tried to move the walker-drone but thanks to Ruben's water attacks, the machine had short-circuited and malfunctioned. The machine just flat out wouldn't work now. Diesel thumped the control pad angrily.

"Curse that stinking water-throwing cat thing!" he growled "My machine won't work now!"

"The same will go to the rest of your troops." muttered Ruben coldly.

He squirted Diesel's walker-drone again with a gush of water out of his hands and the walker drone was sent hurling backwards into a squad of walker drones behind him. Diesel's walker drone knocked the other drones over like they were skittles. The machines

collapsed onto their sides and the pilots fell out of them. Once on its side, there was no getting up for the walker-drones. They were stuck on their sides. Ruben smiled proudly at his good work and he then proceeded to press his hands against the roof of the dune-buggy he was on and water seeped out of his hands and all over the dune-buggy. Once Ruben wet it enough, the dune-buggy would be a sitting duck. The others could see that Ruben had this in the bag. Ruben would short circuit their machinery with his water powers and the pilots would be forced to come out of their vehicles and fight with their bare hands. The jets would be a problem though as Ruben couldn't reach them. His water powers had limited range and they moved too fast so he wouldn't be able to hit it. Bunnie would probably be able to bring them down with her laser cannon while she was up there stopping the ship from functioning. Right now, the jets didn't seem to be doing anything, they were just flying around waiting to attack so the Royal Fighters all focused on fighting the region's ground forces. Ruben continued to short circuit their vehicles but he wouldn't be able to keep this up, there were too many machines and they'd eventually overpower Ruben should they get a good shot at him so the others stepped into help. Mandy had a belt full of bombs so she used those to destroy some of the advancing dune-buggies. The bombs were powerful and just one of them could destroy three buggies at once. Mandy didn't care if anybody got killed in the explosions as she didn't care for the villains at all. She just threw the bombs and blew up the buggies. Any reptile still in a buggy could see what was happening and they abandoned their vehicles quickly before they could be killed by the bombs. Romeo and Vladek were amongst the abandoners. The empty dune-buggies were just quickly destroyed by Mandy. However, she didn't have a limitless supply of bombs and she soon ran out after destroying only twenty buggies. There were thirty more but they had all been abandoned by the drivers in order to save themselves from Mandy's earlier onslaught. Wilson, as well as his trademark spinning blade weapon, had a belt full of bombs just like Mandy and he quickly destroyed twenty more buggies before anyone could think of using them again. There were now only ten buggies left which Ruben promptly short circuited with his water powers. The only vehicles left were eighteen walker drones and one had been short-circuited by Ruben already and five were lying on their sides. Only thirteen walkers remained, not that they'd be much of a worry to the

Royal Fighters. Diesel could see that their vehicles had just sadly failed them so he climbed out of his short-circuited walker-drone and yelled at the top of his voice.

"Reptiles, fight them! Don't worry about the destroyed vehicles, just use your bare fists! We will not be beaten by a bunch of colourful wimps!"

The Reptile Rebels did as they were told and they charged into battle with their claws and teeth bared. The Royal Fighters just jumped into the battle and began fighting the rebellious reptiles.

Meanwhile, Bunnie Rabbot had landed onto the "nose" of the crocodile-like battleship and she deployed her arm cannon.

"Now' let's see what happens if ah blast this durn thing a few dozen times?" she wondered to herself.

She aimed her cannon ahead of her and began blasting the ship's tough armour. Her cannon blasts didn't seem to be doing any damage to the ship but Bunnie was determined to bring it down, no matter the cost. She kept repeatedly shooting the nose of the battleship, hoping to do some damage to it but her blasts didn't seem to be damaging the ship at all. They just appeared to be bouncing off of the ship's tough armour as if they were merely ping-pong balls. But even the toughest of armour failed eventually so Bunnie decided to keep up the blasting until she finally breached the tough armour of the flagship and brought it crashing down to the ground where it would explode into fragments.

In the cockpit, Lord Sycorax could see Bunnie was shooting his beloved aircraft and seeing someone trying to wreck his beautiful battleship made him wild with rage. His face went redder then a ripe tomato.

"Well, well, well! It appears I have someone shooting at me!" he snarled.

"Why does that not surprise me?" muttered Vector.

"Shut up son!" bellowed Lord Sycorax "I'll teach that meddling brat to shoot at my ship!"

He pressed a button on the control pad and the very floor panel he was standing on slowly began to descend into the floor.

"I've got some pest control to deal with boys, you stay there and be good." said Lord Sycorax "Oh, wait, you can't go anywhere because you're locked in so you HAVE to stay there!"

He laughed to himself as he disappeared into the floor of the cockpit and the floor panel closed back up as if it had never moved. The moment Lord Sycorax left, Vector jumped up onto his feet. His father leaving the room seemed to have some sort of electric effect on the crocodile.

"Oh yeah! He's gone!" cheered Vector "Now we can bust our way outta here!"

"Vector, do you even know how to unlock the cockpit?" asked Espio.

"I sure do." said Vector "When I was a Reptile Rebel, dad showed me how to control this thing so when I took his place, I'd be able to fly it."

"Took his place? Does that mean when Lord Sycorax dies, you would take his place?" asked Charmy.

"I would be if I were still IN the region, which I'm not!" said Vector with a crafty smile on his face "Now, how do I unlock the cockpit again? Oh yes, now I remember."

He strode over to the control pad and he tapped some keys onto the keyboard. He didn't get to do much. After only a few seconds of tapping, the computer screen went blank and showed some flashing neon words saying "Access denied." Vector made a grizzly face and he thumped the keypad angrily.

"Darn it! I can't get in!" he growled "My dad must have rigged the system so it would only work for him!"

"Clever croc." muttered Charmy.

"Well there's more then one way to get out of here." said Espio "If we can't let ourselves out, we'll blow ourselves out."

"How?" asked Charmy.

"My exploding shuriken." said Espio, pulling a shuriken out of airspace.

"Ah, good thinking Espio!" said Vector "Nothing in the cockpit seems to be made of Diamond Glass so it'll work this time."

Espio grinned brightly and he threw a dozen shuriken into the door which was their only way out of the cockpit seeing as how they wouldn't be able to get out Lord Sycorax's way as the keypad only worked for him. The shuriken embedded themselves into the cockpit door and Espio counted from three to one in his head. Then right on cue, the shuriken all exploded in unison and the door was reduced to smithereens and thrown outside onto the floor where it lay in pieces and shrapnel. Team Chaotix beamed happily at the fact they were now free from the cockpit. They ran out of the cockpit and headed down the corridor.

"So what now Vector?" asked Charmy.

"We figure out how to stop this ship from firing that Ion, 24, XX thingy cannon at Castle Acorn." said Vector as he bounded down the corridor "I'm sure I have a way of stopping it but I'm not crossing my fingers yet."

The Chaotix ran down the corridor, looking for a way of stopping the Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon from firing. It had ten minutes left to go and it would fire at Castle Acorn and destroy it in a millisecond…

Outside, Bunnie was getting tired out from constantly shooting the ship and she settled back down on the ship's fuselage, panting and gasping.

"Whew!" she puffed, wiping her forehead "Ah didn't think the ship was that tough! Don't matter though, ah'll destroy it eventually, once ah catch mah breath that is."

"I wouldn't count on that being a possibility." came a grizzly voice that Bunnie was unfamiliar with "Because you will be dead before you can destroy this ship."

A hole opened up in the ship's fuselage and Lord Sycorax ascended from the floor and into view. Bunnie stared at him in wonder. He was one formidable looking being to her but she didn't let his frightening appearance scare her at all. She bent down in a battle ready stance and glowered at her opponent.

"Who may ah ask are you gruesome?" she asked coldly.

"I am Lord Sycorax, leader of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles." introduced Lord Sycorax with an eerily polite bow "Whom, may I ask, am I addressing at this very moment?"

"Mah name is Bunnie Rabbot." said Bunnie with a brave face on "And ah am a Royal Fighter! Ah'm here to stop yo' battleship from destroyin' our castle!"

"A Royal Fighter you say?" mused Lord Sycorax "Well this fight just got special! And you appear to be a cyborg judging by your robotic looking arm and legs."

"That's right." said Bunnie "That's why mah name is Bunnie Rabbot."

"So judging by your appearance, I'd say your strength comes from your robot parts." Lord Sycorax analyzed for some reason "That must mean you are not naturally strong and your strength comes from your cybernetic enhancements. I bet with that one arm you're very strong Miss Rabbot. Whereas I…"

Lord Sycorax lunged forward and slugged Bunnie in the stomach so hard she felt like his fist was going to smash its way through her belly.

"…I am naturally strong and BOTH my arms are strong. This makes ME the superior fighter." crowed Lord Sycorax as Bunnie doubled over, gasping and spluttering.

Bunnie, despite the amazing punch, somehow managed to pick herself up, coughing and spluttering and clutching her aching belly.

Lord Sycorax just laughed at her. The one punch of his seemed to have taken Bunnie out as she looked too stunned and pained to fight back. But Bunnie Rabbot was a strong fighter with stamina to match and one mere gut punch wasn't going to bring her down and keep her down. Bunnie drew her robotic arm back and charged towards Lord Sycorax, ready to punch his living daylights out. Lord Sycorax just waited for Bunnie to come to him as if he had some cunning plan in his head. Bunnie lunged at Lord Sycorax with a punch of hers but Lord Sycorax grabbed the punch and twisted her arm to the side. Bunnie screamed in pain and she tried to yank her arm out of the insidious region leader's grasp. Lord Sycorax lifted Bunnie off the ground and tossed her a good distance across the ship's fuselage. Bunnie landed on top of one of the fake crocodile eyes that were just there to enhance the crocodile look of the ship. Bunnie picked herself up and flew back towards Lord Sycorax but Lord Sycorax clasped his fists together, jumped into the air and swung them up, walloping Bunnie in the chin and sending her crashing down onto the fuselage again. Bunnie rubbed her chin and groaned to herself. Lord Sycorax was a lot strong then he looked. She couldn't keep up with him! But she was not determined to let Lord Sycorax beat her. Not even Dr. Eggman's toughest robots could keep her down so she was not about to let a crocodile in armour defeat her. She picked herself up again and charged towards Lord Sycorax, the croc just waiting for her to come again.

Down below, there was a huge, frantic, frenzy of a battle going on between the Royal Fighters and the Reptile Rebels. Geoffrey St. John was fighting Diesel the Komodo Dragon, Wilson and Mandy were fighting Vladek and Romeo respectively and Sally, Nicole and Ruben were fighting all the foot soldiers whilst giving Geoffrey, Wilson and Mandy a helping hand as they went along. Diesel swung a few punches at Geoffrey but the skunk dodged them with his quick agility skills and he counter-attacked by running behind Diesel, jumping up and roundhouse kicking him in the back of the head while in mid-air. Diesel fell forward with a large thump and he ended up getting a bruised chin. Geoffrey loaded his crossbow and prepared to subdue the Komodo Dragon with a stun-dart but two Reptile Rebels, a gecko and a goanna respectively, pulled out a pair

of ray guns and blasted at Geoffrey. The blasts missed him and skunk in the green combat suit swiftly spun around and fired a dart each, both stun darts, at the rebels. The rebels were stunned and brought down on the ground in a slumber. Geoffrey reloaded his crossbow and prepared to shoot Diesel but the Komodo Dragon swiftly took his legs out from underneath him with a hefty smack of his powerful tail. Geoffrey yelped as he suddenly found himself falling onto his back. Diesel smirked at Geoffrey and he grabbed the skunk by the throat. He hoisted him up to his height but before he could do anything, Geoffrey kicked him as hard as he could in the nose. Diesel cried in pain and clutched his nose, dropping Geoffrey. Geoffrey then proceeded to elbow Diesel in the gut, then punch him with the back of his hand and then uppercut him with his other arm. Diesel retaliated with a sucker punch to the face that sent Geoffrey hurtling backwards but the skunk landed on his feet and just skidded to a halt. Diesel ran over to Geoffrey but Ruben tripped him up with his tail. Geoffrey then fired a stun-dart at Diesel but the Komodo Dragon whipped it away with his tail and picked himself up. He leaped at Geoffrey but before he could land on him, the skunk gut-punched him and knocked him down. As for Wilson and Mandy, they weren't having much trouble with Romeo and Vladek as they weren't the best combatants in the world. Wilson had his spinning blade weapon at the ready and he kept swinging it at Romeo to keep him back. Romeo didn't have anything to counter attack with so he was helpless against the dog. Desperate not to get beaten by him, Romeo grabbed Wilson's weapon and tried to yank it out of Wilson's hands. Wilson held on tight and wrestled back, growling a natural dog growl at him in an attempt to scare Romeo. Romeo kicked Wilson in the gut, causing Wilson to lose his weapon to him and double over in pain. Romeo tried to stab Wilson with the spinning blade weapon but Mandy dropkicked him in the head furiously.

"No one is stabbing my boyfriend on my watch!" she yelled furiously, snatching the weapon from Romeo.

She tossed it back to Wilson and the dog smiled graciously at the mouse. Vladek lashed out with his tail and whipped Mandy in the back. Mandy yelped in pain as she felt the whip-crack from Vladek's tail whipping against her back. Mandy spun around and glared angrily at Vladek. Vladek just glared back and raised his frill

menacingly. Mandy just ran to Vladek and kneed him in the gut. She then yanked on his frill and made Vladek yelp.

"Is that stupid frill supposed to scare me gruesome?" she scoffed "I always considered frill-necked lizards to silly looking creatures!"

"I'll show you silly you filthy rat!" snarled Vladek, trying to slash Mandy across the belly with his claws.

"I'm a mouse genius!" snapped Mandy, slapping Vladek across the face so hard, it felt like a punch "Don't you dare call me a rat! We mice are much nicer then scheming, filthy little rats and don't deserve to be compared to our dreadful cousins the rat!"

Vladek rubbed his face and punched Mandy in the face before the furious mouse could attack him again.

"Mouse, rat, whatever, they're both the same creature!" snapped Vladek "Except rats aren't as annoying as you!"

"Don't you dare insult my girlfriend like that!" shouted Wilson, rushing in on the battle and side-handing Vladek in the side.

Vladek hurtled off his feet and into the air. The frill-necked lizard crashed into some Reptile Rebels and knocked them over. Mandy smiled happily at Wilson.

"I'm glad I can count on you to stand up for me handsome." she said flirtingly.

"Not that I really need to." laughed Wilson teasingly "But I don't mind. We've been standing up for each other since childhood and I don't plan to stop anytime soon."

Romeo leaped onto Wilson angrily but Wilson effortlessly threw the chameleon off of himself and onto the ground. He pointed his spinning blade weapon at Romeo's throat and threatened to stab him unless he stayed down. A Reptile Rebel shot Wilson in the shoulder with his ray gun, prompting Wilson to retaliate by throwing his weapon at the rebel. The rebel ducked but the double-bladed pole weapon chipped its helmet and boomeranged back to Wilson. Wilson caught the weapon but Romeo gave the dog an uppercut

before he could pin him down again. Mandy's first response was to kick upwards and wallop Romeo in the chin, knocking him onto his back. Vladek sneaked up behind Mandy and wrapped his tail around her neck. But before Vladek could strangle Mandy, Nicole kicked the lizard away from her and Valdek's tail let go of Mandy's neck. Vladek picked himself up but Nicole elbowed him in the gut and then spun around and kicked Vladek in the face. Diesel then suddenly appeared from behind and grabbed Nicole by wrapping his arms around Nicole's arms. Nicole squirmed in Diesel's grasp.

"Urgh! Let me go!" she yelled.

"Not on your life toots." sneered Diesel "Anyone rebelling against the region must pay the price…with their lives!"

Diesel then prepared to kill Nicole with one quick snap of the neck but before he could even put his hands around Nicole's pretty neck, Sally kicked him from behind as hard as she could. Despite not being much of a fight, Sally was one heck of a good kicker. So good a kicker, she almost rivalled a kangaroo in kicking power. Diesel let go of Nicole and swiped at Sally but the squirrel queen ducked and retaliated with a punch of her own. She then proceeded to punch Diesel rather angrily and rather rapidly. Her punches didn't really hurt Diesel as much as the others when they punched him but she was punching him so rapidly, he couldn't keep up with her.

"You. will. not. destroy. my. kingdom!" screamed Sally with every punch she threw at Diesel.

Diesel got furious with Sally and he swiped at her with his thick, powerful tail but Sally jumped over it just as he swiped at her and she stomped on it, earning a very loud pained scream from Diesel. Nicole and Ruben then decided to add insult to injury by kicking Diesel in a double-team fashion and they knocked the powerful Komodo Dragon onto his back. Sally smirked coyly at Diesel.

"That's what you get when you get on the wrong side of the Royal Fighters Service." she sneered.

Geoffrey St. John appeared beside Sally and aimed his crossbow at him. He shot Diesel with a stun-dart and the stun-dart knocked

Diesel out. The Komodo Dragon lay on the ground in a deep slumber. Geoffrey smirked at the knocked-out Komodo Dragon.

"I can't guarantee he'll be out for long due to the bloke's tough hide stopping the dart from going all the way in." he said "But no worry, I'll stand over the bloke and keep knocking him out every time he wakes up."

"Well it's good to see this fight's going in our favour." said Sally with a satisfied smile on her face "The Region of Rebellious Reptiles isn't as strong as I thought it was going to be."

"At this rate Sally, we'll win in no time and the region will be in retreat." said Nicole as she kicked a Reptile Rebel away.

"I agree." said Sally "Although I wish Sonic was here to see how well we're doing right now."

"I bet Sonic would be beating those blokes to a pulp in no time." said Geoffrey "Oh well, maybe next time the region attacks us. Right now, we've gotta keep this battle up until the region retreats."

"At the rate we're going, the region will be retreating in a few minutes." said Sally, noting how well Nicole, Ruben, Wilson and Mandy were fighting off the reptiles "And I bet Bunnie's doing well on that battleship up there."

"Should I check it out and see how Bunnie's doing?" asked Ruben.

"Yes Ruben." said Sally "If Bunnie needs help, give it to her."

Ruben nodded and he aimed his hands at the ground. Water shot out of his hands and pushed him into the air. He rocketed up into the air and towards the battleship where Bunnie and Lord Sycorax were brawling it out with one another. Unfortunately, Lord Sycorax was winning. No matter how hard Bunnie tried, she just couldn't land a punch on Lord Sycorax. The insidious politic hater was just too strong for her. Bunnie lunged at Lord Sycorax but Lord Sycorax gave her yet another uppercut, the fifth one today in this match. Bunnie fell on her hands and knees and panted heavily but Lord Sycorax didn't let her rest, he kicked her as hard as he could and

sent her rolling down the ship's nose. Bunnie picked herself up yet again and charged at Lord Sycorax. Ruben landed on the ship's nose just in time to see Bunnie get smacked again by Lord Sycorax. The water panther was horrified to see the current status of the match. Bunnie was in trouble and she needed help.

"Oh no! Bunnie hang on! I'm coming!" cried Ruben.

But before he could help Bunnie, the Rabbot was thrown straight into Ruben and the two tumbled over each other. They crashed into the nostril-like structures above the nose that resembled an actual crocodile's nostrils and they groaned in unison. Lord Sycorax strode over to them, grinning sadistically and dusting his hands off.

"Well, well, well. A water panther." he purred, looking at Ruben who was just picking himself up "I never expected to see one in real life, I thought they were myths. Well myth or not, you're going down with your friend water panther!"

And with that, he smacked both Bunnie AND Ruben straight off the ship's nose with one hefty swipe of the arm and sent them hurtling towards the ground! Lord Sycorax cackled madly as he watched Bunnie and Ruben fall to the ground.

"Now the pest control has been dealt with, I can get back to firing the Ion Neutron 24XX9 cannon." he said to himself, snapping his fingers.

The section underneath him descended down into the ship's inner body, carrying Lord Sycorax with it and taking him back into the ship. Lord Sycorax disappeared into the ship and the section that moved then closed back up as if it had never moved. Lord Sycorax then reappeared in the ship's cockpit and he looked at the timer on the control pad to see how long the ship's cannon had until it was ready to fire. Six minutes. The crocodile lord was as pleased as punch. He rubbed his hands together.

"Ha, ha, ha! Almost time!" he gibbered excitedly "Oh the suspense is killing me! Now Vector and friends, you can see why the Region of Rebellious Reptiles always…"

He turned around while bragging and then his bragging was cut short when he noticed that his prisoners were no longer in the cockpit and the cockpit door had been blown to pieces. Lord Sycorax clenched his fists and fumed angrily. So angrily in fact, he looked like he was about to explode like an atomic bomb.

" **WHAAAAAATTTT!** "he roared "HOW IN THE NAME OF SALAMANDERS DID THEY MANAGE TO ESCAPE?"

The Chaotix's escape was not good news at all for Lord Sycorax. If they weren't in the cockpit, then that meant the Chaotix were somewhere on the ship and if they were free to run loose around the ship, that meant they could cause all kinds of chaos and damage to the ship. Lord Sycorax began to angrily thump himself on the head in rage. He thumped his head so hard that not even his helmet could withstand his own punches. Lord Sycorax stopped throwing a hissy fit and panted heavily.

"Those morons could be anywhere right now!" he growled "I bet they're trying to sabotage my ship! Well they've got another thing coming if that's their game! EDWARD!" he bellowed.

"Yes Lord Sycorax?" gargled Edward the Gecko in his usual strangled sounding voice as he entered the cockpit.

"Find Vector and his friends and bring them right here at once!" snarled Lord Sycorax "Those treacherous pests are going to ruin my plans if they are not captured immediately!"

"Yes sir." croaked Edward.

Edward skipped out of the cockpit and ran down the corridors to find the Chaotix. If he didn't find the Chaotix in time, Lord Sycorax would throttle him for his failure so he was determined to find them and stop them from doing whatever it is they're doing. After Edward left the cockpit, Lord Sycorax turned his attention back to the control panel. Five minutes to go until the weapon was ready. Lord Sycorax relaxed himself. He was certain that Team Chaotix wouldn't have enough time to stop him. His ship was invincible and whatever the Chaotix did wouldn't work, the ship would fire its weapon regardless of what they did…

Down on the ground, Wilson and Geoffrey both caught the falling Bunnie and Ruben each and they settled them down on the ground. Bunnie looked seriously hurt after her complete thrashing from Lord Sycorax whereas Ruben hadn't been in battle with Lord Sycorax so he was fine, just a little sore from that powerful smack. Sally knelt down by their side and comforted them.

"Bunnie, are you OK? What happened?" asked Sally.

"Ah…ugh!...fought the region's leader…Lord Sycorax…his lil ol' name is…cough! cough!...he beat the tar outta…me…and smacked…me off his ugly ol' ship…" reported Bunnie weakly "Ah'm sorry ah…couldn't stop it…Sally-girl…"

"It's alright Bunnie." Sally insisted "The region is losing to us, we'll send them packing and they'll be forced to leave us alone."

"Sorry to be on the negative side your majesty but I think a ship's going to be harder to scare off then a bunch of reptiles." noted Ruben "Didn't anyone stop to think that the region's attacks down here are just to distract us while the ship attacks Castle Acorn?"

"I DID think that Ruben." said Sally "That's why I sent Bunnie up there in the first place, so she could stop the ship from attacking. Sadly though, the region's leader appears to be too tough for even her to handle."

"He's such…a…strong critter…" gasped Bunnie "His punches…are like being…whacked…with a hammer…"

"Well I think the sensible thing to do would to be avoid all contact with this Lord Sycorax blighter." said Geoffrey "We've gotta find another way to attack the ship without having to face Lord Sycorax."

"Oh if only Sonic and Tails were here." moaned Sally "They could help us dearly right now! Heck, we could do with anybody's help right now, even Team Chaotix! But we won't be able to reach them while we're out here fighting the region."

"Then we'll just have to continue fighting and rack our brains for a

way to stop the ship." said Geoffrey, loading his crossbow and running back into the battle.

The rest of the resistance joined even, except Bunnie who just lay on the ground, battered and beaten. She was too weak to fight right now so she had to stay down and rest. The Royal Fighters and the Reptile Rebels all continued brawling it out with one another as the fight for Castle Acorn grew ever more desperate by the second…

Meanwhile on the battleship, Vector, Espio and Charmy were still looking for a way of bringing the ship down and stopping the Ion Neutron 24XX9 cannon from firing. Unfortunately, they hadn't had any luck right now. All they'd been doing these past few minutes were running through corridors and looking into rooms only to find nothing of interest. Regardless, this was a big ship so they weren't expecting to find anything straight away. But they only had five minutes to stop the weapon from firing at Castle Acorn so they had to stop the weapon and fast or it would destroy Castle Acorn in one swift blast of the cannon. The Chaotix grew more desperate by the second and they were running out of time so Vector resorted to desperate measures.

"OK guys, this is getting us nowhere!" panted Vector "We'll have to split up and see what we can find! If you find anything that looks like it works the Ion-whatsit-called cannon then don't hesitate to destroy it. We need to stop that cannon or in five minutes time, it'll fire!"

"Very well Vector, I will go up the centre corridor there." said Espio, pointing at an entrance to three different corridors."

"OK Espio, Charmy you go left and I'll go right." said Vector.

"Aw, I wanna go right!" moaned Charmy "Right's always the right way!"

"No it isn't!" growled Vector, lightly thumping Charmy on the head for his stupidity "Just do as you're told already! We don't have much time right now!"

"Sorry." said Charmy, buzzing to the left and flying down the corridor as fast as he could.

Vector quickly lumbered down the right corridor and Espio sped down the centre corridor and ninja-speed. However, luck seemed to be on Espio's side and by sheer coincidence, he appeared to have picked the right corridor as halfway down the corridor, he found a room marked with a warning sign saying "Keep OUT! Valuable Equipment Inside!" Espio smiled to himself. This room must be important if it's marked with warning sign like this. Espio tried the door but it wouldn't open. It was locked tightly shut and looked impossible to break down.

"Humph! Kinda silly to mark a door with "Keep Out" if no one can get into it in the first place." muttered Espio, noting the stupidity of this situation.

Espio threw a shuriken at the door and stepped back. The shuriken exploded and the door fell down into the room with a heavy clang that ominously echoed around the room. Espio crept into the room and saw what was inside. The room was full of hi-tech generators and machinery that whirred and hummed loudly and ominously. The machinery in this room looked deathly important. So important that if the machinery was destroyed, it could mean the end of the battleship. Espio decided to investigate this room further and resisted the urge to cut loose on the generators. He just wanted to stop the weapon from firing, not bring the ship down yet because if he did, he, Vector and Charmy would perish in the crash along with Lord Sycorax. Espio observed the giant generators as they hummed away doing whatever it was they were doing right now. Espio then spotted something in the corner of the room. A lonely little computer that had no one working on it. The screen wasn't even flashing, it was blank, hinting the enormous possibility it was turned off. Espio tip-toed over to the computer and switched it on. The computer whirred into life and showed the blue-prints and schematics to the battleship itself. Information like that could be very useful so Espio decided to search in on those blue-prints. He moved the cursor over to the nose of the ship and clicked on it. The computer screen showed him the inside of the ship's nose which revealed to Espio that the Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon was of course, stored inside of

it. Espio mused on this discovery and had an idea.

"If I can hack into the weapon's controls from here, I'll be able to stop it from firing." said Espio "Or even better, get it to destroy itself."

So Espio decided to see what he could do on this little computer. If he couldn't hack into the controls and stop the weapon, then Castle Acorn would be added to the destroyed political landmarks list…

Down on the ground, the Reptile Rebels were getting whupped by the Royal Fighters. As brilliant as they were and as strong as their weaponry was, they just couldn't match the strength and power of the Royal Fighters. The Reptile Rebels decided to bring in the eighteen walkers they had left but Wilson made short work of them by slicing all their legs off with his spinning blade weapon after he threw it at them. The walkers fell onto the ground with a clunk and their legs lay in halves beside them. But that didn't mean they couldn't shoot. Their weapons were still functional so the pilots fired the walker drones' weapons at the Royal Fighters but Ruben quickly managed to disable them all with his water powers. One quick soak was all the weapons needed and they were completely unusable. After a quick rest, Bunnie Rabbot had managed to get back on her feet, albeit still wobbly and weak, and she joined in the fighting although her efforts weren't as great as they could have been due to her being weakened by Lord Sycorax's brute strength. She punched one rebel with her robot arm with only half of her usual strength but enough strength to knock it off its feet. Another rebel tried to shoot the Rabbot but Sally tackled it from behind with a kick to the side and the rebel was knocked over and its gun flew out of its hands. Nicole and Mandy teamed up on Vladek and Romeo found himself being overwhelmed by Wilson and Ruben. Diesel had come to from his stun but Geoffrey was ready to put him back to sleep. Unfortunately, a Reptile Rebel distracted Geoffrey by shooting at him and the skunk was forced to dodge hastily before he could get hit. Geoffrey shot back at the rebel but he missed, narrowly. Diesel picked himself up and tripped Geoffrey up with one kick to the legs. Diesel then observed the fight around him, which to his dismay was not going well at all. He pulled a spherical device from the back of his belt and looked at it.

"Looks like I have to resort to desperate measures." he muttered, tossing the sphere into the air.

The sphere hurtled through the air and then stopped before it could fall back down. It hung in the air as if invisible strings were attached to it and holding it afloat and the sphere suddenly began to glow a bright blow glow. The sphere whirred loudly and then suddenly some laser beams shot out of the sphere and towards the Royal Fighters. But these weren't lasers that killed people; these lasers wrapped around all the Royal Fighters' waists and dragged them away from the battle and towards the sphere. Sally, Nicole, Geoffrey, Wilson, Mandy, Bunnie and Ruben were all suddenly dragged towards the sphere by the holding lasers. They were then placed directly under the sphere and the sphere suddenly emitted a force field that surrounded the Royal Fighters. It looked like a dome now. Geoffrey picked himself up and kicked the force field, only to make distorted wavy patterns on the barrier and the barrier made a loud whirring noise. Mandy picked herself up and tried punching the barrier, only to get the same results as Geoffrey. It seemed as if they were trapped in the sphere's force field.

"OK you reptilian rascals, what's all this then?" asked Sally crossly.

"It is an anti-reptile barrier." explained Diesel "Invented by Romeo the Chameleon himself. Anyone within ten yards of this barrier who isn't a reptile gets pulled towards the sphere and sealed in a force field. It is our ultimate weapon and one of the many reasons we win our battles."

"You dirty cheats!" screamed Mandy, banging against the barrier "You let us out of here now!"

"What do you think we are? Brainless?" sneered Vladek "You are staying in here until Castle Acorn is destroyed. Don't worry about getting hit by debris though, the barrier will protect you. But it won't protect you from us because once Castle Acorn is destroyed, we will shut off the barrier and kill you all!"

And with that, Vladek cackled with laughter at his captives. The Royal Fighters just glared at him in an unimpressed manner Then suddenly, the battleship hovered towards Castle Acorn and stopped

within twenty feet of it. The nose of the crocodilian style ship opened up, revealing the Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon inside and the cannon looked like it was ready to fire. The Reptile Rebels all grinned in unison whereas Sally could only stare in horror as if someone had just shot her in the heart.

"No! Please! Not my home!" wailed Sally, her eyes filling with tears.

Nicole just sadly put a hand on Sally's shoulder as the squirrel queen tried her hardest to hold back tears as the battleship prepared to destroy Castle Acorn. In the cockpit, Lord Sycorax cackled with joy. He danced about like a happy little child.

"It is time!" he crowed "Wherever Vector and his friends are, they're too late! My cannon is ready to fire!"

He raised his hand and yelled at the top of his voice.

"Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon…FIRE!"

And he pressed the fire button on the control pad. The cannon powered up and a huge laser blast began to build up inside the cannon as it prepared to fire….

Oh my gosh...oh my gosh...oh my gosh...Castle Acorn is doomed! Or is it...? Find out next time in the exicting finale to Rebellious Reptiles! Read and Review.

Rebellious Reptiles 4

Part 4: Rebelling Against The Region

"Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon…FIRE!" bellowed Lord Sycorax and he pressed the fire button on the control pad.

The huge cannon which was in the nose of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles' magnificent flagship began to glow a brilliant green colour inside as a huge laser blast began to build up inside of it. In a matter of moments, the laser would fire at Castle Acorn and completely destroy it, adding it to the ever-growing list of destroyed political landmarks that the region had destroyed. Queen Sally Acorn stared up at the ship helplessly as it prepared to destroy her home. Trapped in a force-field along with the Royal Fighters and her best-friend and lady-in-waiting Nicole the Lynx, Sally could only stand and watch as the battleship's Ion Neutron cannon prepared to fire. Castle Acorn was well and truly doomed to be destroyed as Sonic was elsewhere* and everybody was trapped in a force-field so nobody could save it now. Sally was about to become homeless in a matter of seconds. But just when Castle Acorn's fate seemed to be sealed, the cannon stopped glowing and the energy blast stopped building up and it faded away into nothing. It seemed as if the cannon had just suddenly decided not to fire, as if it didn't want to destroy Castle Acorn after all. Sally just stared in both joy and wonder as the cannon stopped what it was doing. The Reptile Rebels all stared up in astonishment, wondering why the cannon wasn't firing like it should be. Lord Sycorax could see that his Ion Neutron cannon wasn't firing like it should be so he tried again. He pressed the fire button but nothing happened. He then lost his already short temper and he pounded the button as hard as he could, trying desperately to get the cannon to fire and destroy Castle Acorn. But no matter how many times he thumped the button, the cannon didn't do anything, not even make the slightest noise.

"WHY. ISN'T. IT . **WORKING?** " he roared at the top of his powerful voice as he punched the button again.

He stopped his pitiful pounding seeing as the cannon just wasn't going to work. He grabbed a comlink and roared into it.

"Edward! Why isn't the Ion Neutron 24XX9 Cannon firing at Castle Acorn?" bellowed Lord Sycorax.

"How should I know sir?" snapped Edward, his messenger gecko with a being-throttled-sounding voice "I'm looking for the wayward Vector and his cronies so I have no idea what's going on in the bridge sir!"

Lord Sycorax slammed the comlink back on the control pad and ran a quick diagnostic test on the ship by taping keys on the control pad. The screen displayed the ship's blue-prints to him and the diagnostic test gave him the all-clear sign, meaning there was no fault or problem with the weapon whatsoever. This in turn just made Lord Sycorax even more confused.

"The system's giving me the all-clear so the cannon isn't faulty or damaged." he grumbled to himself "Maybe for some reason it's just not working? Or…"

His brain ticked and he realized what was going on with his precious ship.

"Someone has hacked into the system!" he cried "That's it! Someone must be hacking into my ship and stopping the cannon from firing! But who could possibly be behind it?" he wondered to himself "Vector's not a computer expert so he can't possibly be the hacker. I'd best find out who this hacker is and kill him so my ship can get back in order."

And with that, Lord Sycorax left the cockpit and he stormed down the corridor in search of this mysterious hacker. He had a feeling it was either one of Vector's friends or a rouge Reptile Rebel but he was sure it was one of Vector's cronies as no reptile would dare to rebel against him. Once he found the Chaotix, he would make sure their deaths were very gruesome and painful just for mutinying against him…

Meanwhile, in the generator room, Espio the Chameleon smirked to himself as he admired what he had just done on this little computer he was working on. He had managed to hack into the cockpit's controls and he stopped the weapon from firing. But merely stopping the weapon from firing was not enough. He had to stop the cannon from working whatsoever. Now he'd stopped the weapon from firing, he could focus on stopping the cannon for good. He tapped some keys on the keyboard.

"Now let's see if I can get the cannon to destroy itself." he said to himself.

He tapped more and more keys until he managed to find something on the computer that caught his interest. It was the power gauge for the cannon itself. Ion Neutron cannons had insane amounts of power and if they had too much power, they would overload and destroy themselves. Espio didn't know this kind of information but he could sense that the power gauge was important so he decided to tamper with it. After a few clicks on the screen and taps on the keyboard, he altered the power gauge and increased the power to above the recommended power level, all the way to 200 which was way too high for an Ion Neutron cannon, an Ion Neutron cannon's power gauge should only be 125, not 200. Espio smiled to himself again.

"I bet now I've increased the power to this thing, it'll destroy itself when Lord Sycorax tires to fire again." he said to himself "On the other hand, I'm into the cockpit's controls so I can just activate it myself. In fact, I'll do just that."

He scrolled back to the ship's controls, which he was now in control of thanks to this brilliant little computer he was working on, and with a tap of a key on the keyboard, he ordered the Ion Neutron 24XX9 cannon to fire.

The ship's enormous weapon began to whirr and hum loudly as it was powering up, much louder then before due to the increased power. Lord Sycorax heard the sound in one of the corridors he was searching through and the very sound of his cannon working again puzzled him.

"Has the hacker caused my cannon to fire without me activating it?" he wondered to himself "Why would the hacker do that?"

Outside, the trapped Royal Fighters watched as the battleship's Ion Neutron 24XX9 cannon began to power up and prepare to fire once again. Sally just gave a very puzzled look once again.

"Why did the cannon just stop itself and then suddenly start working again?" she asked herself.

"Why ever it's done that I dunno but what I do know is it's not a good thing it's decided to start working again!" screamed Nicole "Castle Acorn's going to be destroyed now!"

Nicole couldn't be more wrong right now. The ship's cannon was powered up to the point it was ready to fire but instead of firing a giant laser blast that would disintegrate Castle Acorn and vaporize it into atoms, the cannon's blast ripped it's way through the cannon and overloaded onto itself. The cannon erupted into a colossal fireball of fire and smoke and the ship's entire nose section was destroyed by the explosion. The explosion caused the ship to make a colossal jerk backwards that knocked Lord Sycorax off his feet. Vector the Crocodile and Charmy Bee were thrown against a wall by the ship's sudden jerk and they wondered what was going on right now. The ship had been pushed backwards by the blast for about thirty feet, a good enough distance away from Castle Acorn so should it crash, the explosion of the ship wouldn't harm the castle. The Reptile Rebels were in indescribable shock right now. Their battleship was in turmoil! The Ion Neutron cannon was destroyed! Now they couldn't destroy Castle Acorn now! The ship's whole nose section was destroyed and billowing with smoke and fire. Debris rained down on the ground and to add insult to injury, a huge chunk of debris the size of a basketball came falling down to earth and by sheer bad luck, it landed straight on top of the shield generator sphere, crushing it into pieces and switching off the force field! The Royal Fighters, who had sent the chunk falling and he pressed themselves against the force-field to avoid being crushed, were now free to fight the Reptile Rebels once again! Sally beamed at their good luck.

"The anti-reptile barrier's destroyed!" she beamed "Now we're free to fight the Reptile Rebels again!"

"Well then, let's kick some reptilian butt your majesty!" declared fellow fighter and battle-lover Mandy Mouse.

"You took the words right out of my mouth Mandy." said Sally with a grin on her face.

With that said, the Royal Fighters: Geoffrey St. John the Skunk, Wilson the Dog, Mandy Mouse, Bunnie Rabbot and Ruben the Water Panther all charged into battle with Sally and Nicole joining them. The Reptile Rebel squad leaders Diesel the Komodo Dragon, Romeo the Chameleon and Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard gave the order to attack and the Reptile Rebels did the same as the Royal Fighters. They charged into battle and the enormous battle which had been going off earlier commenced once again.

Back on the ship, Lord Sycorax picked himself up and he dusted himself off. He had no idea what had just happened right now but he knew that something bad had happened to the ship since it jerked backwards slightly and made him fall over. His messenger gecko, Edward appeared in the corridor he was in and he ran down to see if his beloved lord was OK.

"Lord Sycorax! Lord Sycorax!" he rasped "Are you OK? What happened? The ship just did a sudden jerk and there was the sound of an explosion…"

"An explosion?" mused Lord Sycorax "That must be what had just happened! Something exploded in here. But what?"

He pressed a button on the side of his helmet and a hologram of the ship's schematics emitted out from a holo-projector on the side of his helmet. The hologram showed that the entire nose section of the ship had been completely destroyed and blown apart. The ship now looked like a flying crocodile with no jaws. Lord Sycorax instantly managed to work out what had happened to his precious ship.

"The Ion Neutron 24XX9 cannon has been destroyed and it took the entire nose section of the ship with it!" he blurted "I'll order the computer to divert all power from the cockpit into the engines to keep the ship stable. This thing won't stay airborne any longer due to the damage it's received. I wonder why did the cannon blow itself up?"

"What do you want me to do boss?" asked Edward.

"Keep looking for Vector and his buddies." ordered Lord Sycorax "They're still on the loose and I have a strong feeling they're the ones responsible for my glorious weapon self-destructing!"

"OK." said Edward, darting back down the corridor and running down a corridor on the left.

Lord Sycorax turned around and ran back to the cockpit. Even though he wanted to find the hacker that stopped the Ion Neutron cannon from firing and kill him, he had to sort out the ship and keep it stable or it would fall. The damage done to the interiors was so extreme that the ship would get a power-failure and the ship would fall and crash land onto the ground below where it would destroy itself. As much as Lord Sycorax wanted to destroy Castle Acorn right now, he had to save his ship and once he did that, he would have to retreat and get his ship repaired before he could continue his assault on Castle Acorn. He wouldn't be able to destroy Castle Acorn if his ship didn't have a weapon. Lord Sycorax bust into the cockpit, which had shattered windows due to the force of the explosion shattering them and he instantly set to work on rebooting all the ship's power from the cockpit and into the engines so the ship would be able to remain airborne. Unfortunately for him, the controls wouldn't let him in, nor would they respond to him. He pressed as many buttons as frantically as he could but he couldn't get the controls to respond to him. Since Espio had hacked into the ship's controls, they would only do what Espio told them to now and if Lord Sycorax was to access the control pad again, Espio would have to hack out of the controls and put them back under Lord Sycorax's control or Sycorax could just find the computer and fix everything from there. Lord Sycorax began to go red with rage as he figured out what the problem was.

"Blast that filthy, stinking, wretched, loathsome, hateful, baneful, poisonous, scum-sucking, low-life, system hacking computer hacker!" he roared to himself "He must have hacked into the system and is preventing me from having control of my ship! He must want me to fall! Well, I'll show this hacker! I can't trace his position since he's locked me out of the control pad so I guess I'll have to smell him out!"

And with that, Lord Sycorax stomped out of the cockpit and back down the corridor. He was going to find this hacker and brutally murder him for this whole ordeal if it was the last thing he did…

Meanwhile, Espio read the readings the computer was giving him on the ship's current status. He was pleased that thanks to his quick computer hacking, he had managed to destroy the cannon and severely damage the ship (and possibly wound Lord Sycorax's pride at the same time) but he wasn't pleased at the fact the ship's damage was so severe, the ship would crash-land in a matter of minutes. The computer he was on even gave him a countdown saying "POWER FALIURE IMMINENT: TOTAL POWER FALIURE IN FIFTEEN MINUTES. CRASH LANDING INEVITABLE: ABANDON SHIP." The clock began to count down from fifteen minutes. Espio just switched the computer off and ran out of the generator room.

"Looks like I did too good a job on sabotaging this ship." he muttered to himself "I'd best find Vector and Charmy and get them off of this thing before it crashes!"

Luckily, he wasn't running for long for as the moment he took a left, he ended up crashing into Vector's stomach and the crocodile and chameleon found themselves falling backwards onto the floor. Vector gasped and rubbed his gut as he tried to get the wind back into his body. Espio picked himself up and he shook his head furiously to regain his senses. Vector picked himself up and beamed happily.

"Espio! There you are!" he cried "Me and Charmy were looking for you the moment the ship suddenly jerked backwards! What do you

think just happened?"

"I don't think anything happened, I know what happened." said Espio smugly "I found a computer in a room full of generators and I managed to hack into the ship's controls from there. I overloaded the Ion Neutron Cannon and made it activate so it destroyed itself and blew the entire nose section of the ship apart."

"Wow! That was so cool Espio!" cried Charmy "You're awesome!"

"I know. Maybe a little too awesome." said Espio in despair "The ship's going to fall in fifteen minutes. We have to get off this thing before we perish along with the ship."

"Wow, that's a first." said Vector brightly "Nobody's ever managed to bring this ship down, not even get close to bringing it down. Lord Sycorax always claimed this thing was impervious or summet like that and yet, in fifteen minutes this whole thing will crash and explode."

"I guess it isn't impervious after all." said Espio casually "Now let's get moving! We need to get off this ship before it crashes!"

"I hope I can find a way off." muttered Vector "As a matter of fact, maybe we could try going to the main hangar bay again. I bet nobody's repaired that hole in the wall we made when we tried to escape the first time**."

"Well let's find one of them shaft thingies and slide down to the main hangar bay!" cried Charmy "What are we waiting for? We need to get going!"

"We know Charmy!" snapped Vector "You don't need to tell us!"

With that said, the three Mobians ran for it down a corridor, keeping their eyes open for an emergency shaft in the wall they could use to get to the main hangar bay. They didn't get very far unfortunately for as they darted around a corner and whizzed up the corridor, they ran into Edward the Gecko. Edward heard them coming and jumped out of their way before the Chaotix could accidentally crash into him. Vector, Espio and Charmy skidded to a halt and they stared at

Edward. Edward stared back with his big googly eyes.

"Hey! I've found you at last!" gargled Edward "Now Vector, you and your friends can make this easy on yourselves and just surrender to us and let me bring you back to Lord Sycorax or this will get really unpleasant and I'm pretty sure you don't want that do you?"

Vector just laughed in Edward's face as if the gecko was extremely funny to him. Edward just looked at him with a confused expression on his face.

"Do you really expect me to be afraid of you Edward?" snorted Vector as he finished laughing "You're just the messenger! You can't possibly fight me! Heck, you don't even know how to fight so how can this get unpleasant for us?"

Edward clenched his fists and he gritted his teeth. His face turned redder then a freshly picked apple.

"Don't make me have to whup you Vector!" warned Edward.

"Oh! Edward's threatening me! I'm so scared!" jeered Vector in a mocking tone "Come on guys, we've gotta get off this ship before it falls."

Vector turned his back on Edward and strode off. The first thing that happened was Vector suddenly felt a sharp kick to the back of his head and he was knocked down onto his stomach. Vector gasped in surprise at what had just happened. Edward stood on his back and glared at Vector.

"I may have been unable to fight before but I've had training since your betrayal!" croaked Edward "Now I can stand up even to the likes of you!"

"We'll see about that." muttered Vector, throwing Edward off of his back by pushing himself up.

Edward landed on his feet and just as Vector stood up, Edward rammed the crocodile in his back. Vector fell over onto his hands and knees again. Espio and Charmy could sense that if they wanted to get off this ship, they had to get past Edward first. Charmy buzzed

towards Edward and walloped the gecko in the back of his head. Edward fell onto his knees but he wasn't down for long. He quickly picked himself up and kangaroo kicked Charmy in the side, sending the bee flying into a wall. Espio kicked Edward ninja-style and sent the gecko staggering backwards in a dizzy circle. Edward regained his senses and he charged at Espio, yelling at the top of his voice. Espio leaped up and dropkicked him in the head, knocking him over. Edward picked himself up and tried to attack Espio but the chameleon dodged his attacks. Charmy tried to attack Edward but Edward grabbed Charmy by the arm and threw him straight into Espio. The bee and chameleon ended up tumbling over each other. Vector however had picked himself up from Edward's earlier attack and he walloped Edward with one powerful punch. Edward was sent hurling backwards and he crashed into a wall. The gecko gasped and he lay against the wall groaning in pain. Vector tried to grab Edward but the gecko picked himself up and head butted him in the stomach. He then leaped up and dropkicked him in the snout. Vector clutched his aching jaws and Edward then proceeded to trip Vector up. Espio tried to punch Edward but Edward dodged him, grabbed his arm and threw him over onto his back. Charmy tried to sting Edward but Edward gave Charmy a very painful uppercut that made the bee feel like his bottom jaw had been broken. Edward cackled a throaty cackle at the Chaotix, certain he had just beaten them.

"I tried to warn you three idiots but you wouldn't listen!" he crowed "Now you're all battered and beaten and ready to go back to Lord Sycorax! I bet I'll get promoted for this…"

Then suddenly, Vector picked himself up and punched Edward as hard as he possibly could. Edward staggered backwards, twirling around in a daze and he collapsed onto the floor, completely knocked out. Vector dusted his hands off and he sneered at Edward.

"Not bad Eddie, but you're still not good enough." he crowed "Now that fight's other, let's break for it Espio and Charmy!"

"Roger." said Espio, getting back to his feet.

"Okey-Dokey!" said Charmy with a silly little salute.

"None of you, will be going anywhere!" bellowed a terrible voice that

Vector was not hoping to hear right now.

The Chaotix shifted their gaze to the corridor ahead of them and they saw none other then Lord Sycorax standing there with a look of murder on his face. That very gaze seemed to fill Vector with fear as he suddenly started trembling at the region leader. Espio and Charmy just put on brave faces and they prepared to fight. Lord Sycorax clenched his fists and bared his teeth. He looked like he was going to tear somebody to pieces right now.

"You three have caused enough trouble on this vessel!" he snarled "First you try to escape from me and then you destroy my cannon! And now thanks you three idiots, this entire vessel is going to crash in a matter of minutes!"

"Correction, the cannon's destruction was entirely my doing." said Espio, wielding a pair of shuriken and itching to throw them "I hacked into the cockpit controls from the generator room and stopped the cannon from firing. I then overloaded it and made it fire so it would destroy itself. You can't save this ship since I've prevented you from using the controls so it is going to fall. You are beaten Lord Sycorax so save yourself further humiliation and abandon ship or you'll perish along with your precious ship."

Lord Sycorax just got even angrier. His entire body turned red with rage and he clenched his teeth so hard they almost cracked.

"You were the one that destroyed my Ion Neutron 24XX9 cannon?" roared Lord Sycorax "So you're the cause of the cannon's destruction and my ship's downfall?"

"Yes I am." said Espio "And I have no regrets. I did it all for the innocent, and I did it for Vector, a reptile who doesn't belong with your kind of scum anymore."

"Funny, I was going to say the exact same thing Espio." chuckled Vector.

Espio should really learn to control his mouth because angering Lord Sycorax is down-right suicidal. When Lord Sycorax lost his temper, nothing could contain him or hold him down, not even a

steel cage or thick heavy chains. Lord Sycorax pounced on Espio in blind rage but Vector shielded Espio and punched him before he could land on him. Lord Sycorax was sent hurling backwards and he landed very sharply on his back, bending the jet structures on his back.

"Espio, Charmy, you two make a break for it!" ordered Vector "I'll keep tall, green and ugly busy!"

"But Vector, you can't beat Lord Sycorax!" protested Espio "He wiped the floor with all three of us with little to no effort!"

"Yeah he did and that puzzles me because he wasn't that strong before." said Vector "I was only eleven when I had a fight with him nine years ago and I managed to do well against him so now I should be at least on par with him. I'm going to fight him and see if I can work out how he's gotten stronger."

"But Vector, what if you don't make it?" Charmy said worriedly "This ship's gonna crash. You'll die if you don't get off!"

"I know." said Vector "But I'm the only one who has a chance against Lord Sycorax right now. I have to fight this battle, I can't let him get off and make it out alive."

"And we can't let you stay here and die along with him!" wailed Charmy, grabbing Vector's arm and frantically trying to pull him "Please Vector, come with us! Don't stay here with your crazy, evil dad!"

"Charmy, I'll be fine." Vector assured the bee even though secretly, he was beginning to doubt he would make it out alive "Once I beat Lord Sycorax, I'll try and find a way off this joint. Now you and Espio have to make a break for it. I'll keep Lord Sycorax off your back."

"No!" cried Charmy "I'm not leaving without you Vector! I lost everything when I got kicked out of my colony, I don't wanna lose you too! You're the closest thing to a daddy I have! Without you I'm just a lonely little bee again!"

"Charmy, you and Espio get out of here now! That's an order!"

snarled Vector.

Espio grabbed the heartbroken bee and tugged him away from Vector. Charmy just stared helplessly at Vector with wide-open eyes filling with tears. Espio could sense poor Charmy's pain right now and the chameleon couldn't help but feel sorry for Charmy. Regardless, Vector was willing to put his life ahead of theirs and he had ordered them to run for it. Espio, while holding Charmy, ran for it down the corridor and he disappeared around the corner. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and he glared at Vector with his evil red eyes. If he wasn't wearing a helmet right now, you'd probably see fire in those eyes.

"So I guess you're going solo for this battle eh?" asked Lord Sycorax.

"Yeah." said Vector "I'm not gonna let Espio and Charmy fall victim to you Lord Sycorax. Not to mention, I have a score to settle with you."

"And so do I son." said Lord Sycorax, cracking his knuckles and grinning like a swamp creature "May the best fighter escape this falling vessel alive."

"Yes. May the best fighter escape." said Vector calmly, preparing to fight Lord Sycorax once again.

Lord Sycorax roared as loud as he possibly could and he charged towards Vector in blind rage. Vector could sense that Lord Sycorax was in a rage and he could use this to his advantage. When people just fought in blind rage and didn't focus properly, their fighting wouldn't be as good as it usually is. Lord Sycorax blindly threw a punch at Vector but being as how badly thrown and focused it was, Vector dodged it with ease. Vector clasped his fists together and slammed Lord Sycorax in the back of his head. Lord Sycorax staggered forward but he saved himself from falling over. Vector then proceeded to punch Lord Sycorax as hard as he could in the face. Vector didn't stop there though; he kept it up and kept throwing punches at Lord Sycorax. Every time Vector punched Lord Sycorax, the region leader staggered backwards and some punches were so hard, Lord Sycorax ended up losing some of his teeth! He had lots

of teeth though so he wouldn't lose them all in a hurry. Vector then sucker-punched Lord Sycorax above the bridge of his snout and the region leader was sent skidding backwards down the corridor. He managed to stop himself and he charged backwards Vector. Vector dodged Lord Sycorax as he tried to punch him but Lord Sycorax quickly spun around and walloped him with the side of his fist. Vector fell forward and landed on his hands and Lord Sycorax gut-kicked Vector before he could push himself back up. He then proceeded to try and bite Vector's arm but Vector dodged and the region leader ended up with an aching snout as his jaws hit the floor. Vector picked himself up and Lord Sycorax tried to bite him but Vector grabbed his jaws and held them firmly open. Lord Sycorax tried to chomp down on Vector but Vector was just too strong for him. The region deserter kept the region leader's jaws firmly open. Lord Sycorax could see his jaws weren't going to work so he punched Vector in the stomach to make him let go. Vector let go of Sycorax's jaws and bent over and the moment he did, Lord Sycorax chomped on his left shoulder! Vector screamed in pain and punched Lord Sycorax in the visor of his helmet, breaking it and hitting him in the eye. Lord Sycorax yelped in pain and he clutched his eye. The visor to his helmet was broken now thanks to Vector's punch and now you could see his real eyes, which were very much like Vector's only red instead of orange. Vector clutched his throbbing shoulder, which now had big teeth marks on it. That would hinder him slightly but Vector wasn't going to let a mere chomp on the shoulder bring him down. Lord Sycorax lunged at Vector but Vector dodged yet again and gave Lord Sycorax an uppercut with his right arm, which didn't have a bitten shoulder. Lord Sycorax stumbled backwards and fell onto his back. Vector tried to pounce on him but Lord Sycorax kangaroo kicked him away before he could land on him. Lord Sycorax leaped back onto his feet and cut loose in an angry array of face punches. Lord Sycorax punched Vector rapidly in many places on his face. His jaws, his cheeks, his eyes, his forehead and even his chin. After one final wallop to the jaws, Lord Sycorax decided to finish off Vector by giving him a tremendous uppercut. And uppercut so powerful that Vector flew straight up into the ceiling. Vector crashed into the ceiling, leaving an imprint of himself in it and he fell straight back down onto the floor. He groaned hoarsely and Lord Sycorax advanced menacingly on him.

"You were a fool to challenge me son!" he sneered "I am all powerful! More powerful then you'll ever be! And now you will go down with this ship while I make a clean getaway!"

"Not on my watch!" yelled Vector, lunging at Lord Sycorax and chomping him on the arm.

Lord Sycorax bellowed in pain and he tried to wrestle his arm out of Vector's toothy grip. But Vector's jaws were just as strong as Lord Sycorax's, once he bit, it was impossible to make him let go. Vector however, didn't want to hold on for long so he just let go of Lord Sycorax's arm. Vector had bitten Lord Sycorax right on the armour piece on his lower arm. It was now dented, crumbled and full of holes from Vector's teeth. Lord Sycorax was livid with rage.

"Do you know how hard that'll be to replace?" he roared "That was a strength-enhancing arm gauntlet! It's thanks to this brilliant device I am able to take on many opponents and beat them effortlessly! Now you've broken it, I'm gonna have to build a new one from scratch and they're not easy to build!"

"Thanks for the tip dad." sneered Vector "Now I know how you've mysteriously gotten stronger since the last time we met. Those armour pieces on your arms are making you stronger! Well now I've broken one, I guess you won't be so hard to bear Lord Sycorax!"

"I am such a moron!" muttered Lord Sycorax, face-palming himself in annoyance.

Now Vector knew how to hinder Lord Sycorax, he proceeded to bite Lord Sycorax's other arm and break the strength-enhancing arm gauntlet with on chomp. Lord Sycorax growled angrily and punched Vector in the cheek. But now his gauntlets were destroyed, his punches were ten-times weaker then before. He and Vector's strength were now on par with each other, making Vector's fight all that much easier. Vector and Lord Sycorax linked arms with one another and they pushed on each other until suddenly, the ship gave a tremendous jerk that threw them both over onto their sides. The two crocodiles picked themselves up and they looked around. Lord Sycorax pressed a button on his helmet and a hologram of the ship's schematics to see what was going on The damage done to

the ship earlier had caused something to blow inside and now the ship was preparing to fall. The ship only had eight minutes left until doom according to the built in timer. The crocodiles had to get off the ship now.

"This thing's going to fall in eight minutes!" cried Lord Sycorax "I have to get off of here now!"

"Not yet!" yelled Vector, socking his father directly in the face "Our fight isn't over yet! You wanna get off, you have to beat me first!"

"So be it!" growled Lord Sycorax "I don't care if you broke my gauntlets, I'll still defeat you!"

"We'll see about that Syco boy!" jeered Vector.

That name-call just made Lord Sycorax even angrier.

"It…is… **LOOOOORRRDDDD!** " he bellowed " **LORD SYCORAX TO YOU!** "

He charged head-first into Vector and head-butted him in the gut. Vector fell over and Lord Sycorax darted past his son, desperate to escape with his life. Vector picked himself up and ran after his father. He could not let Lord Sycorax escape. He had to be killed for the good of democracy and for the good of Mobius so Vector had to prevent his dad from escaping or the Region of Rebellious Reptiles would still be at large and free to destroy parliaments and governments. Vector caught up to Lord Sycorax and he grabbed him by his tail, which was much longer than his own. Lord Sycorax fell over and Vector swung him back down the corridor. He then saw a control pad on the wall and he pressed a button, not really sure what it does. A huge steel door closed behind him, trapping him in the corridor with Lord Sycorax. The region leader's escape route was cut off now. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and saw that his escape route was sealed off thanks to Vector. He growled in annoyance. What else could go wrong for him?

"You're not going anywhere Lord Sycorax." said Vector "Until you finish this fight with me."

"If you're so desperate to die then I'll be happy to arrange your funeral for you!" growled Lord Sycorax "That will be the best death for the region deserter you are Vector!"

With that said, the two crocodiles lunged at each other and unleashed hell on each other once again as the clock began to countdown to the ship's doom…

Meanwhile, Espio and Charmy had found an emergency hatch and they both slid down it to the main hangar bay. Since all the weapons were being used down on the ground below, the hangar bay was completely empty. The only ones in the bay were Espio and Charmy. Luckily for them, the hole in the wall they had blasted with the dune buggy earlier was still there so they could get out of the ship that way. Charmy grabbed Espio by his arms and the bee flew the chameleon through the hole in the wall and into the open air of outside. It felt good to be out into the open and to have the air blowing in his face again as Charmy flew Espio down to the ground. Charmy did love the outdoors after all. Charmy and Espio reached the ground and Charmy put Espio down. The two could see what damage had been done to the ship after the Ion Neutron Cannon exploded and they could see that the ship was tearing itself apart with small explosions blowing here and there all over the ship's fuselage. Espio was pretty amazed by all this. He hadn't expected his handiwork to have done THAT much damage to the ship! No wonder it was going to crash land in a matter of minutes! Seeing all this happen just made Charmy worry even more. He looked like he was going to go mental with worry right now.

"Well, I didn't think I damaged the ship THAT badly!" blurted Espio" I guess I'm too good a hacker for my own good."

"That just means Vector's doomed on there!" wailed Charmy "We need to get him off now!"

"Charmy, we can't go back on the ship, it's too dangerous." said Espio "Besides, Vector wanted us to get off and we've done just that, we can't disobey him."

"But who's gonna get Vector off if I don't fly up there to help him?" sobbed Charmy, the bee's eyes were streaming with tears now "Vector can't fly! He's gonna go down with the ship if I don't help him!"

"You do have a point there." said Espio "Maybe it would be best if you go back up there and help Vector. OK Charmy, you fly up and be ready to help Vector get off. I'll stay down here and see what's going on."

"OK Espio." said Charmy with a big smile on his face "I won't let you or Vector down!"

With that said, Charmy flew back up to the ship as fast as he possibly could. As for Espio, he could see the Royal Fighters and the Reptile Rebels duking it out with each other thirty feet away. It looked like the Royal Fighters were winning but there was no harm in helping them win faster was there? So Espio decided to join in with the battle. He charged over to the battle at ninja speed and deployed a pair of shuriken.

As for the battle, the Royal Fighters had had this fight completely in their favour since the anti-reptile shield had broken and freed them. Only Diesel, Vladek and Romeo were really a match for them, the foot-soldiers were just punching bags for the Royal Fighters in this match. Sally and Nicole double-teamed the powerful Komodo Dragon by kicking him in the face together and then they both tripped him up with a roundhouse kick to the legs each. Diesel was brought down on his back. Sally and Nicole did a high-five.

"Good kicking Sally." said Nicole.

"Same to you Nicole." said Sally "I'm amazed how easy this fight has been for us since that anti-reptile barrier's been shut off."

"The Region of Rebellious Reptiles obviously isn't as strong as it thinks it is." said Nicole "That battleship was the only real thing we had to worry about."

Then suddenly, Diesel picked himself up and grabbed Sally and Nicole by their necks and he hoisted them up to his height.

"I am the great and powerful Diesel the Komodo Dragon, second in strength only to Lord Sycorax!" he boasted "I will not let a bunch of royal brats defeat me!"

"Oh stop being such a whiny little baby you big brute!" retorted Sally, kicking Diesel in the gut as hard as she could.

Diesel gasped hoarsely and he dropped both Sally and Nicole. Before he could recover, Geoffrey St. John stunned him with a stun dart once again. Diesel collapsed onto the ground in a deep slumber once again. Geoffrey smirked at the knocked out Komodo Dragon.

"I'm never gonna get tired of putting this big guy to sleep." he sneered "It's just too easy."

"Thank you Geoffrey." said Sally "How are the others doing?"

"Wilson, Mandy, Bunnie and Ruben are making easy work out of them reptile blokes." said Geoffrey as he watched Bunnie uppercut a Reptile Rebel into the air with her robot arm "These jokers aren't even a real threat. That battleship was the only thing we had to worry about and now that's having problems we have nothing to worry about."

"I still wonder why its cannon suddenly blew up." wondered Nicole "I bet there was a saboteur on that ship."

"Indeed there was Nicole." said a deep voice the lynx knew too well.

Espio the Chameleon arrived on the scene and let some Reptile Rebels have it in the back with his shuriken. The shuriken struck the rebels in the back and killed them instantly. Espio did an elegant ninja somersault into the air and he landed just in front of Sally and Nicole. Geoffrey stared at him in amazement.

"Well grind my gears, it's Espio!" he cried.

"Where did you come from Espio?" asked Sally.

"Me, Vector and Charmy were captured by the region but we managed to break free and I sabotaged the ship by hacking into the controls and I caused the cannon to explode by overloading on

itself." explained Espio.

"Well that was certainly lucky for us." said Sally with a smile "Who knows what would have happened if you, Vector and Charmy weren't on that ship."

"Where are Vector and Charmy Espio?" asked Nicole with a tone of concern in her voice.

"Vector's fighting Lord Sycorax, the region's leader in the ship and Charmy's gone back to rescue him." explained Espio "I hope Charmy can make it though, that ship's going to crash land."

"I'll say it is mate." said Geoffrey, peering at the battleship which was a good thirty feet away from them "Look at it! It's tearing itself apart! I guess the cannon's destruction did more then just leave it weapon-less."

"It did." said Espio "At least Lord Sycorax won't be able to use it again once it crashes."

"If he survives that crash or gets off the ship before it crashes, I am going to arrest that insidious fiend!" declared Sally hotly "Make him pay for destroying those innocent parliaments and governments who are only trying to keep the planet under control!"

"I should hope you do." said Espio, charging off to fight another soldier.

However, before he could even throw a shuriken, the Reptile Rebels all suddenly stopped fighting the Royal Fighters and they ran for their lives. Romeo and Vladek had decided that the region just couldn't win this battle so they had decided to run for it before things got any worse. They gave the order to retreat and the Reptile Rebels, with some hesitation, did as they were told and they ran for their lives. Two soldiers picked up the knocked out Diesel and they carried him away. The Reptile Rebels fled Mobotropolis and left Castle Acorn behind.

"What about Lord Sycorax? He'll skin us alive once he finds out we've abandoned him!" shrieked Romeo.

"He won't!" retorted Vladek "He's going down with his ship! He's going to die when that ship crashes, meaning that the region will need a new leader and we all know who that'll be!"

"Diesel of course." purred Romeo "I like your thinking Vladek. I bet Diesel might even be better than that narcissistic idiot Lord Sycorax!"

"He will be…" Vladek purred back as he, Romeo and the entire region ran for their lives.

The moment the region left and disappeared, Wilson, Mandy, Bunnie and Ruben regrouped with Sally, Nicole and Geoffrey and they panted and gasped tiredly.

"Well…how about that…puff!" panted Wilson "The region's just upped and run for it."

"I…knew we were…too tough for them!" crowed Mandy "Royal Fighters rule!" she cheered, punching the air excitedly.

"But what about Lord Sycorax?" asked Bunnie "That guy's still at large ah bet. Mind ya'll, ah don't think that ship's gonna stay airborne any longer." she added, looking at the stricken battleship, which was getting ever closing to crashing.

"It is." said Espio" Thanks to my handiwork, that thing's going to crash."

"Your handiwork?" mused Ruben "You mean to say that was your doing Espio?"

"It was." said Espio "I'll explain the full details later. Right now, we've gotta hope Charmy and save Vector before it crashes."

"Ah mah stars! Vector's on that ship?" shrieked Bunnie "Ah hope he's not fightin' that Lord Sycorax guy! Ah'm one of the strongest Royal Fighters there is and he wiped the floor with me so Vector has no chance!"

"He is unfortunately." said Espio "He decided to keep him busy so me and Charmy could get off. Now Charmy's going to try and get

him off before the ship crashes."

Victory for the Royal Fighters had quickly turned into worry now as they stood where they were, hoping Charmy could rescue Vector before the ship crashed. The ship only had three minutes left until doom. As for Charmy, he had flown back to the ship but he didn't go back in the main hangar bay as that route wouldn't help him find Vector any faster. Instead, he decided to see if there was a way in through the roof. Luckily, he didn't have to find a way in as an explosion blew through the roof and left a giant hole in it. Charmy flew through the hole and buzzed down the corridors in search of Vector. Vector was on the top floors of the ship so Charmy would find him on this level; it was just a matter of where on this level he was. The bee's heart was in his throat as he searched frantically for Vector. Explosions tore through the walls behind him as the ship began to tear itself apart. Charmy tried not to look behind him as the explosions erupted behind him.

"Hold on Vector, I'm coming for ya!" cried Charmy as he turned to the right and flew down the corridor.

Further up the corridor, Vector and Lord Sycorax were still fighting each other. Since Lord Sycorax's strength-enhancing gauntlets were destroyed, the fight was now even sided with Vector having more winning points but Lord Sycorax quickly getting back in the game. Vector threw Lord Sycorax into the wall but Lord Sycorax wasn't down for long. He picked himself up and grabbed Vector in a chokehold. Vector gagged and choked as Lord Sycorax's arm wrapped tightly around his throat. Vector stomped on Sycorax's foot in order to make him let go and Lord Sycorax did so to rub his foot better. Vector socked Lord Sycorax in the face before the region leader could recover and Lord Sycorax stumbled. Vector clasped both of his fists together and he gave Lord Sycorax a tremendous uppercut that seemed to knock the life out of Lord Sycorax. Then Vector, with his hands still clasped together, head-slammed Lord Sycorax on the head and knocked him over. Lord Sycorax was quick to react though. He chomped on Vector's leg and Vector yelled loud enough to bring the house down. Vector tried to punch Lord Sycorax but Sycorax moved his head before Vector could hit him and he elbowed Vector in the gut. Vector punched at Lord Sycorax but Lord

Sycorax grabbed the punch and head-butted him in the face. Vector stumbled, clutching his face and Lord Sycorax tripped him up with his tail. Vector landed on his back but before anything else could happen, another explosion rocked the ship and the entire vessel started to tilt forward. The explosion was so loud, it woke up Edward the Gecko and the gecko was up on his feet in one second flat. Vector and Lord Sycorax could feel the ship tilting forward as it plunged towards the ground.

"What's happening?" cried Edward.

"This ship is going to crash!" yelled Lord Sycorax "We need to get off this thing! Now!"

"OK boss." said Edward, scuttling off as fast as he could.

Before Lord Sycorax could run after him, Vector grabbed his leg and tripped him up.

"No…you're not getting away Sycorax!" he grunted.

"Yes I am not let go of me!" cried Lord Sycorax, trying to make Vector let go of him.

Vector clung onto his leg as tight as he could and tried to make sure Lord Sycorax stayed down. As for Edward, he had run a good distance down the corridor but an explosion tore its way through the wall just as he ran past it and blew him off his feet. The gecko was hurtled against the wall and the moment he hit the wall, there was a sickening crack sound and the gecko was dead. Killed by the explosion that had torn its way through the wall. Lord Sycorax didn't care about that though, he could just get another messenger. All he cared about was making it off alive. It didn't seem he would though as Vector gripped his legs very firmly and refused to let go. Then suddenly, Charmy Bee finally arrived onto the scene and he tapped Vector on the shoulder. Vector turned his head to his right and his face brightened at what he saw.

"Charmy!" he cried "You came back! I guess you're here to get me off this thing?"

"I am indeed." said Charmy "Let's get out of here before this thing falls!"

So quick as a flash, Charmy grabbed Vector and lifted him off the floor. Charmy flew off with Vector in tow but Lord Sycorax decided to make things harder for the two. He ran after Charmy and Vector and pounced on Vector. He grabbed Vector and clung onto him as Charmy carried him down the corridor. Charmy was surprised that the weight he was carrying suddenly increased and he looked over his shoulder to see Lord Sycorax clinging onto his son.

"If you're getting off this ship then you're taking me with you!" yelled Lord Sycorax "I'm not letting you outlive me Vector!"

"Get off me Sycorax!" retorted Vector "We're not taking you with us!"

"Yeah!" yelled Charmy, flying dangerously close to a wall and Vector turned to the right slightly so Lord Sycorax ended up hitting the wall in an attempt to get the region leader off himself.

Surprisingly Lord Sycorax managed to hold on but before Charmy and Vector could try again, an explosion tore through the floor beneath them and the three were sent hurtling across the floor and into a wall at the end of the corridor. Vector, Charmy and Sycorax all crashed into the wall and the ship continued to tilt forward. It had tilted so far forward that the floor was now sloped and nobody could stand up. Vector, Charmy and Sycorax all began to slide across the floor as the ship continued tilting forward as if they were going down a tremendous slide. More explosions tore their way through the ship and the ship stopped tilting forward. Instead, it began to plunge down to the ground. Alarms blared pitifully through the ship and fire and smoke billowed out through various parts of the ship. Vector grabbed Charmy as the bee slid past him and Charmy flew back up the corridor whereas Sycorax continued sliding down the sloped floor. Unfortunately for Charmy and Vector, they were too late to get off the ship for the ship had plunged into the ground and it erupted into a terrific fireball that could be seen for miles around. The whole ship had gone up in flames like a giant bonfire and the fuselage of the ship caved in on itself. Now the magnificent crocodile-esque ship just looked like a flaming wreck of metal and debris. The Royal Fighters had witnessed the horrific crash and Espio felt like he was

going to die of shock. The Royal Fighters ran up to the wreckage of the battleship which was billowing smoke out like mad as the flames consumed the wreckage. The wreckage looked more horrific up close and Espio began to fear the worst. It looked like Charmy and Vector had perished in the crash. No one could possibly have survived something so horrific. Sally began to fear the worst as she surveyed the wreckage.

"Did…did…did they…?" she stammered, hardly able to speak.

"I didn't see them fly off." said Espio, shaking furiously "I don't think Charmy and Vector made it off. They might have…"

He couldn't say the terrible words "perished in the crash". The chameleon was so shaken that he ended up falling onto his knees. He could hardly feel his legs or even his hands. His two best friends appeared to have fallen victim to the horrific crash. The others shared Espio's sorrow for they knew how good Vector and Charmy were along with Espio on their missions. And now Team Chaotix would just be one member now. Then suddenly, just when all hoped seemed lost, some debris was shifted away and out of the flaming wreck of the ship appeared a bruised, cut, bitten and half-awake Vector the Crocodile with an unconscious Charmy in his arm and dragging an unconscious Lord Sycorax with him! Vector and Charmy were alive! Unfortunately, so was Lord Sycorax. Vector dragged Lord Sycorax out of the wreckage and stumbled out onto the grass. He fell onto his knees and he dropped Lord Sycorax beside him. He settled Charmy down gently by his side. The Royal Fighters all beamed happily but no one was happier then Espio who almost lost his mind with joy.

"Vector! You and Charmy made it!" cried Espio "And just when it looked like you failed to make it!"

"We…almost…did." panted Vector "It's…a…miracle…we survived…"

"What about Lord Sycorax here?" asked Bunnie "Is he alive?"

"He…lived….as well…" grunted Vector "But…he's…unconscious…as…you can…see…"

"Well we'd best arrest him before he wakes up." said Sally, glaring at the region leader "Wilson, Mandy, you two take him to the Empire City MPD station and get Melchett to prepare a nice cell for him!"

"With pleasure your majesty." said Mandy, grabbing Lord Sycorax by his shoulders and hauling him up while Wilson carried him by his legs.

And with that, the two quickly ran off to Royal HQ so Mandy could get her hover-car and they could carry Lord Sycorax to the MPD station in the car as Empire City was a short drive-away and it would be quicker to get there by car. The moment the dog and mouse left with Lord Sycorax, Charmy Bee began to stir a little and he woke up. Charmy sat up weakly and looked at Vector who was beside him.

"Vector…are we dead…or did we…make it?" slurred Charmy weakly.

"We made it…Charmy…" said Vector with a smile "The ship's down…and Lord Sycorax…is going to jail…"

"Yay…" cheered Charmy weakly "But…what about…the other guys…?"

"They've run for it." said Ruben "I have a feeling they'll be back but at least their leader's going to be locked away so they'll be even easier to handle next time."

"I hope so Ruben." said Sally "As for you Vector, your team are the heroes of the day. You managed to save Castle Acorn from destruction and you brought down the Region of Rebellious Reptiles' flagship. I don't know how I can possibly thank you three enough for this!" she gasped in happiness.

"Your thanks is all…we…need…" said Vector casually "We're… Team Chaotix and we…fight for…what's right…as well as…solve some…mysteries with…our…detective skills…"

"Very well." said Sally brightly "I'm so glad you made it and the region has been defeated. Castle Acorn is safe again! If only Sonic was here to see what you all did today!"

"I think Sonic would have been amazed." said Espio "Amazed at how we managed to save the day without him."

"I…wonder how…Sonic's doing…now…" wondered Vector aloud.

But Sonic's well-being would be the least of anyone's worries for Angel Island was now under siege from an unwanted guest from Knuckles' past…

Footnotes:

*** See Stories 70-72**

**** See Part 2 to this arc**

All's well that ends well I guess. Well, for some that is! Tune back into Heroes of Mobius as Knuckles faces the return of Imperator Ix! As for this story, join me next time as the Northern Royal Fighters take the spotlight in Tales from Mobius! Read and Review.

P.S. chaoskaix, I cannot believe you think I'm better than Ian Flynn just for giving Vector a backstory! I'm flattered to be considered better than Ian Flynn, my hero and inspiration for this story and my current writing style! Thank you very much! :)

The Sentinel Blockade 1

Arc 8: The Sentinel Blockade

Takes place after Story 72 and between Stories 73-75

Part 1

Sonic the Hedgehog, his best friend Tails the twin-tailed fox and his self-proclaimed girlfriend Amy Rose were on a mission in Black Acropolis, a zone with two volcanoes and lava geysers to destroy a Eggman robot production factory. They were on the mission with the Northern Royal Fighters, a Royal Fighter team from Nekronopolis. The team consisted of Miranda Mongoose: the leader, Kari the Rat: the mechanic, Kate the Eagle: the brawns and Thunder and Bolt: the comedic twins with bad comedy on their side. Mecha Rouge, a roboticized Rouge the Bat, had tried to stop them from doing anything to the factory but she had just been beaten by the team. Now Mecha Rouge was out of commission, they could get back to the mission But suddenly before anything could happen, there was a bright gold flash that appeared from behind and Sonic leaped a foot into the air. The flash turned out to be just a warp ring and out of the warp ring appeared Knuckles the Echidna. The warp ring shrank down behind him and he caught it in his hand before it could drop onto the floor. Sonic was rather surprised to see Knuckles appear from nowhere.

"Hey Knucklehead!" he cried "What the heck are you doing here and how did you find us?"

"Wilson and Mandy helped me." explained Knuckles "And, as reluctant as I am to admit it, I'm here because I need your help Sonic!"

"What do you need little old me for?" asked Sonic.

"Imperator Ix has returned to Angel Island and he's causing chaos as we speak!" explained Knuckles frantically "He's corrupted the Master Emerald and filled it with dark Chaos Energy and he's kill all

the guardians on the island! I'm the only one left now!"

Sonic couldn't believe what he was hearing. He had heard the story of Imperator Ix when he first visited Angel Island and he really didn't like the sound of that guy. And now he was back on Angel Island to wreck the lives of everybody on the island! Oh well, that just meant Sonic had another villain's butt to kick now.

"That is so un-cool!" yelled Sonic angrily "That Imperator Ix guy is gonna get a hedgehog style-thrashing courtesy of me! Knuckles, warp me, Tails and Amy over to Angel Island! We've got an evil echidna to stomp on!"

"Wait a minute." said Tails quickly "Who's Imperator Ix?"

"You're about to find out bud." said Sonic "Because we're going over to Angel Island to stop him!" he announced, smacking his fist onto his hand.

"But what about our mission?" asked Amy "We need to destroy this place so Eggman can't get any new robots from this factory."

"You three go and help your friend." said Miranda "We'll complete the mission without you."

"Are you sure?" asked Sonic "I won't be there to give you a speedy exit from Black Acropolis once you complete the mission you know."

"Kate will be our exit." said Miranda "She'll fly us high out of harm's way I can assure you."

"OK then." said Sonic "Good luck Miranda."

"Good luck to you too Sonic." said Miranda with a salute.

Knuckles tossed the warp ring into the air and the ring expanded to twice its size. Knuckles, Tails and Amy stepped through the warp ring and vanished from sight. Sonic gave the Northern Royal Fighters a wave goodbye and then he stepped through the warp ring. The ring shrunk down in size and vanished into thin-air. The moment the warp ring vanished, Miranda strode off down the corridor. Her team followed her save for Kate who stayed guard

staring down the pit to make sure Mecha Rouge didn't get out of the pit to try and stop them from completing their mission.

"Are you sure we can do this without Sonic?" asked Kari worriedly.

"Kari, as amazing as Sonic is, we can do this mission without him." said Miranda "Sonic was only helping us a good deal that's all. All we have to do is turn off the barrier and let the lava geysers or the volcano destroy it for us."

"Right, sorry Miranda, I just worry too much sometimes." said Kari, lightly touching her chest.

"So do you have any idea where the control room is?" asked Thunder.

"Not really Thunder but I'm sure we'll find it in this corridor." said Miranda "I have a feeling it's going to be around here."

So Miranda began looking into the rooms of the corridor Sonic, Tails and Amy had been looking in earlier. As for Mecha Rouge, she came to from Sonic's powerful spin-dash and she tried to climb out of the pit since she couldn't fly out of the pit as Kate had torn her wings off. Kate punched her back down onto the floor before the Robian bat could even reach the surface. Mecha Rouge fall back down to the floor with a clud and Kate laughed at her. Meanwhile Miranda, after quickly searching through the rooms by just opening a door and peering inside and then shutting it after finding out it wasn't the room she was looking for, she finally found the control room. It was behind a silver door marked with a notice board saying "No unauthorised personnel beyond this point." The room looked like what any control room looked like. It was full of buttons, had compute monitors and various controls. Some of those controls, of course, were for the fire traps that Mecha Rouge had tried to use on the Royal Fighters but failed thanks to Sonic, Tails and Amy. Miranda beamed like a sunrise at the fact they'd finally found the control room.

"Kari, Thunder & Bolt! I've found it!" she called to her team mates as they looked through the other rooms.

Kari and the chipmunk brothers stopped what they were doing and they joined their leader in the control room.

"Now we've found the control room, what do we do now?" asked Bolt.

"Switch the barrier off." said Kari, surveying the control pad which was full of buttons and levers and dials of all shapes and sizes "But I have no idea which of these controls is for the barrier. I don't want to take a wild guess in fear of destroying the place and taking us with it."

"I have an idea." said Miranda quickly.

She ran out of the control room and called down to Kate who was still standing guard at the still-open pit in the floor.

"Hey Kate! Bring Mecha Rouge to us!" ordered Miranda "She maybe of some use to us!"

Kate obeyed and waited for Mecha Rouge to try to climb out of the pit again. Mecha Rouge tried to climb out once again but Kate, instead of punching her back down the pit, grabbed the roboticized bat by the head and hauled her out of the pit. Kate then carried Mecha Rouge over to the control room, which she managed to find after following Miranda back to the room. Mecha Rouge squirmed in the eagle's grasp but Kate's hands could hold things as tightly as her talons so Mecha Rouge wouldn't be getting free anytime soon. After Kate arrived into the control room with Mecha Rouge, Miranda put her plan into action.

"Right you roboticized fiend, you shut off the factory's barrier for us or Kate will smash you to pieces." threatened Miranda in a very stern voice, a voice she often used when telling Thunder and Bolt off for being a pain in the backside.

Kate squeezed Mecha Rouge's metal head very hard to show the Robian bat that Miranda wasn't kidding. Mecha Rouge was fiercely loyal to Dr. Eggman and she really didn't want to help her enemies destroy her master's factory but she couldn't serve Dr. Eggman if she was destroyed so it would be better to live to serve her master

another day then be destroyed now and never get to serve Eggman again. Kate carried Mecha Rouge over to the control pad and held Mecha Rouge out so she could reach the pad. Mecha Rouge pulled a lever that had a red sphere and was marked with green trimmings around the base of the lever. The computer monitors flashed with big red words saying "BARRIER SHUT-DOWN". That meant the factory's barrier was shut down, leaving it prone to any lava geysers or the volcanoes themselves. The team cheered with delight, their mission was complete at last.

"Now, before we leave this hell-hole, we have a couple of things to do." said Miranda "Kate, break the lever that Mecha Rouge just pulled."

Kate obeyed and snapped the lever in two, meaning Mecha Rouge wouldn't be able to switch the barrier back on once they left the factory.

"Now knock Mecha Rouge out." ordered Miranda.

Kate obeyed and held Mecha Rouge at arm's length. She drew her arm back and prepared to punch her daylights out. But the robotic bat deployed her hidden arm lasers and she shot Kate in the gut. The eagle screeched a pained, eagle screech and she dropped Mecha Rouge. Mecha Rouge then proceeded to kick Kate in the gut and then dropkick her onto her back. Miranda tried to pounce on Mecha Rouge but Mecha Rouge grabbed the mongoose by her hair and slammed her down onto the floor. Kari tripped Mecha Rouge up by roundhouse kicking her legs and before Mecha Rouge could pick herself up, Miranda stomped on her head.

"I'd stay down if I were you." said Miranda fiercely "You don't want us to destroy you do you?"

Mecha Rouge just bared her metal fangs and aimed her arm laser behind her head. She shot Miranda in the thigh and the mongoose screamed in pain as the scorching hot laser seared her thigh and left a nasty gash on her leather trousers. Mecha Rouge took advantage of this situation and threw Miranda off of herself. Thunder and Bolt double-teamed Mecha Rouge with a kick slam to the face each but that was barely enough to hurt the roboticized bat. Mecha Rouge

leaped into the air and screw-kicked them both. Because she didn't have wings anymore, she couldn't fly into the air and use her attack so she had to rely on high jumps instead. Thunder and Bolt were thrown into the wall and they groaned in pain as they slumped against the wall. Mecha Rouge aimed her arm lasers at the chipmunks but Kate the Eagle appeared from behind and grabbed Mecha Rouge into a headlock. The Robian bat did an electronic sounding choke as Kate wrapped her muscular arms around her neck. Mecha Rouge quickly managed to get out of the hold by kicking Kate in the thigh. Kate dropped Mecha Rouge but she was quick to recover and she blocked a punch from Mecha Rouge. Mecha Rouge tried to punch her again but Kate grabbed her fist and threw her arm to the side, leaving Mecha Rouge to stagger and then Kate gave Mecha Rouge an uppercut that sent her flying into a wall. Mecha Rouge slid down the wall and slumped on the floor. Kate cracked her knuckles and marched up to Mecha Rouge. She was about to knock Mecha Rouge out until suddenly, a low ominous rumble shook the factory and the Northern Royal Fighters almost fell off their feet and onto the floor. Kari began shaking all over.

"W-w-w-what was that?" she asked worriedly.

"I think that sounds like a volcano getting grouchy." said Thunder, listening to the rumbles as the continued to shake the factory.

"It IS a volcano getting grouchy you idiot!" snapped Bolt, clapping Thunder across the nose "Don't you know a grouchy volcano when you hear one?"

"I do, dingus!" snapped Thunder, clapping Bolt back "We've been in this zone before remember!"

"Thunder! Bolt! Stop clouting each other and shut up!" shouted Miranda in annoyance "We're in serious danger here! There's a volcano about to erupt and we need to flee the zone and fast! This factory won't protect us since the barrier is down so we need to get moving before the volcano erupts or we'll be buried underneath tonnes of lava and molten rock along with this factory!"

With that said, Kate left Mecha Rouge alone and she dashed out of the room with Thunder and Bolt scuttling after her. Miranda ran out

of the room as quickly as possible. Kari tried to run after her team mates but Mecha Rouge lashed out and grabbed the rat by the leg. Kari tripped over and landed flat on her face. Mecha Rouge flashed a sinister, evil, metallic grin at Kari as she held onto the rat's leg. Kari immediately freaked and tried to pull her leg out of Mecha Rouge's metallic grasp.

"Let go of me!" screamed Kari as Mecha Rouge pulled her towards herself "Miranda! Help me!"

Miranda, who was not very far down the corridor, heard her friend's distress call and she turned around and ran back into the control room. Upon arrival, she saw that Mecha Rouge had pulled Kari to herself and she bared her metal claws and metal fangs at the rat. Kari cowered against the floor and stared helplessly at Mecha Rouge as the Robian bat prepared to kill her. Miranda charged towards Mecha Rouge and kicked the Robian bat in the head, knocking her onto her back and leaving her dazed and wondering what had just happened. Miranda helped Kari back onto her feet and the girls ran for their lives as another ominous rumble shook the factory. One of the two volcanoes in Black Acropolis was getting ready to erupt. Mecha Rouge picked herself up and analyzed the loud rumbles that were getting worse and worse as time went on.

"An-al-y-sis: a-vol-ca-no-is-a-bout-to-erupt." she deducted "The-bar-rier-has-been-shut-off-so-this-fac-to-ry-will-per-ish. I-must-es-cape-now-be-fore-I-get-caught-up-in-the-lava-flow."

After that analysis, Mecha Rouge pressed a button on the control pad and a secret compartment in the floor opened up. Mecha Rouge jumped down the open compartment and went through an underground tunnel that led to outside the factory. The moment Mecha Rouge left, a lava geyser tore its way through the floors of the control room and the room was filled with lava, spewing everywhere from under the floors. Mecha Rouge made it to the end of the escape tunnel and she emerged from the underground and into the open air of the outside world. Now she was out of the factory, Mecha Rouge quickly ran for it, unable to fly away as she lost her wings to Kate so she had to run out of Black Acropolis. Luckily for her, the area the factory was in had less lava geysers then the other areas so Mecha Rouge had a much safer route then

anyone heading back to the entrance.

Meanwhile, Kate, Thunder and Bolt had already made it out of the factory just as the volcano erupted whereas Miranda and Kari were still inside after Mecha Rouge had distracted them. The first volcano was billowing with fiery red lava and thick, black and grey smoke that drifted up into the sky, turning the already black skies even blacker then before. The lava began to stream down the sides of the volcano faster then a waterfall and it appeared that if Miranda and Kari didn't show up in another minute or two, they would be too late. The eagle and chipmunk twins stared at the erupting volcano as the lava began to stream down towards them. The rocks above them were sloped slightly so not too much lava would reach the ground but not even the sloped rocks would stop the lava from destroying the robot production factory. Kate began to grow worried for Miranda and Kari. She began to wonder if they were dealing with Mecha Rouge right now and needed help. Kate began to consider dashing into the factory to help her dearest friends but even if she did that, they would never make it in time. Then suddenly, Miranda Mongoose and Kari the Rat finally appeared from around the corner and they dashed out of the factory. Kate's face brightened at the appearances of her two friends. Thunder and Bolt cheered excitedly.

"Yay! They made it!" they cried.

"Kate, fly us out of here! Quickly!" screeched Miranda as the lava began to spew over the ledge above them and rain down on the ground below.

Kate obeyed and she flapped her mighty wings. She slightly ascended off the ground and held Miranda's left arm with her right talons and Kari's right arm with her left talons. Miranda grabbed Bolt and held him close to her whereas Kari grabbed Thunder and held him close to her. Kate flapped her wings ever harder and took to the skies with her precious load dangling beneath her. Kate swooped up into the air as fast and as hard as she could as the erupting volcano began to cover the ground below it with searing hot lava. The robot production factory was completely engulfed by the lava and the whole factory was reduced to a fiery wreck that would never be seen again. Once the lava cooled down, it would set into rock and the wrecked robot factory would be buried underneath the hard rock that

the dried-up lava became once it cooled. Miranda looked over her shoulder and beamed happily as she watched the robot production factory become engulfed by the lava.

"We did it boys and girls." she said with a triumphant tone in her voice "The robot factory has been destroyed."

"Yay!" cheered Thunder and Bolt.

"I can't wait to tell Sonic about this." said Kari "We managed to destroy the factory while he was helping his echidna friend with something*."

"We'll contact Sonic once we get back to base." said Miranda "I can imagine the whole R.F.S. being proud with us for our efforts. We braved the Apocalypse Zone and destroyed a factory that no one would have dared to try and destroy. What a good day this has been for us."

But even the best of days never ended happily for Miranda was about to get an unwelcome visit from a minion working for a certain moustachioed scientist that every Mobian loved to despise with all their hearts…

Robotropolis.

A fantastic robotic metropolis that served as Eggman's home and headquarters that stood proudly alone in the middle of the Northern Border of Megapolis. The city had been undergoing serious maintenance after the heist on Eggman's headquarters during his absence the time he took over Royal HQ**. The headquarters had been completely destroyed by the Royal Fighters during that heist and Eggman had been spending most of his time repairing the headquarters. Right now, the building was almost complete. By tomorrow it would be ready and functioning once again. Due to Eggman's main headquarters being out of service, he and Alonzo had been taking refugee in some back-up headquarters. Dr. Eggman hadn't really been doing much since the time Shadow left him*** other then repairing his headquarters. His servant bot Alonzo

the Butler Bot hadn't been doing much since the destruction of Eggman's oil rig****, which Eggman had gone berserk about once he heard the news from him. He'd just been doing a secret project behind Eggman's back while he re-built his headquarters while also keeping up the subtlety by remaining ever loyal to make sure Eggman didn't get suspicious about his secret betrayal. Right now, Alonzo had received word from Mecha Rouge about the destruction of the Black Acropolis robot factory and the servant bot was gob-smacked to receive such a report. He zipped out of the back-up quarters and rushed over to Dr. Eggman, who was overseeing the finishing repairs on his headquarters.

"Master! Master!" squeaked Alonzo as he wheeled up to his master.

"What is it Alonzo?" snapped Dr. Eggman "Can't you see I'm busy here?"

"Yes sir, I can you moustached moron." snorted Alonzo "I've got a horrible news report from Mecha Rouge!"

"Let me guess, Sonic the Hedgehog has decided to ruin another one of my machines or bases has he?" asked Dr. Eggman in an annoyed tone.

"Um…no actually." said Alonzo, pleased that Eggman guessed wrong "The Northern Royal Fighters sabotaged the Black Acropolis robot factory and it's just been destroyed by a volcano!"

Dr. Eggman stared at Alonzo as if the servant bot had just spoken to him in Japanese. His moustache drooped down as if there were weights attached to his hairs pulling them down. His glasses almost fell off his nose.

"Say…that…again…" choked Dr. Eggman.

"The Northern Royal Fighters sabotaged the Black Acropolis robot factory and it's just been destroyed by a volcano!" repeated Alonzo "Do I have to say it again sir or have you got the message?"

"I've got the message now Alonzo." said Dr. Eggman slowly "My robot factory in Black Acropolis has been sabotaged by the Northern

Royal Fighters and a volcano destroyed it? And just when I though I'd picked a place no one would be brave enough to go into to destroy a factory of mine!"

"Those Royal Fighters are brave aren't they?" said Alonzo.

"They are indeed." said Dr. Eggman crossly "A little TOO brave that is. Well, if they're going to destroy my factory, I will destroy them and see how they like it! Send a message to Warden-bot Katherine from the Sentinel Blockade to find the Northern Royal Fighters, kidnap their leader and then bring her to the blockade itself."

"Why sir?" asked Alonzo.

"So I can bait those idiots into my parlour and then I'll have Katherine kill them all for destroying my factory!" snapped Dr. Eggman "Now stop looking like a-duck-that's-forgotten-how-to-quack and get to it!"

"Yes sir." said Alonzo quickly, zipping off to the backup quarters so he could send a message to the so-called Katherine and send her on a kidnapping mission…

The Sentinel Blockade.

If hell existed, chances are it would look a lot like the Sentinel Blockade. The Sentinel Blockade was a prison blockade run and manufactured by yours truly, Dr. Eggman himself. The prison was located on the Southern Border of Nekronopolis and was impossible to detect on radar due to its signal scrambling technology, preventing anyone from finding it with any tracking devices of any kind such as computer monitors and satellites, meaning nobody knew where this place was and no one as such could attempt to find it. Not that they would want to due to how horrible a place it was. The prison was as evil and dark as Dr. Eggman himself. Any captured Mobian that was far away from Robotropolis but near to the blockade was thrown into the blockade and kept there until Dr. Eggman had the time to pick up the captured Mobians and roboticize them all in an instant. Anyone unlucky enough to be in the

blockade was treated to an onslaught of pain, torture, hard work and physical abuse from the service bots the prison had. The staff members of the Sentinel Blockade were, of course, Eggman robots of all shapes and sizes and armed with many terrible weapons. The leader was a fem-bot codenamed Katherine by Dr. Eggman (he likes the name Katherine). The prisoners liked to call her "Kat the Warden" instead. Katherine was the warden of the Sentinel Blockade and was unbelievably cold and cruel for a robot. She never spoke as Eggman never gave her a voice, instead she communicated by playing recordings of other people's voices such as Dr. Eggman's or Dr. Eggman would speak through Katherine, making it look like she was talking with his own voice when actually she wasn't. Katherine, being a female robot, had a sleek feminine build and was silver and blue in colour. Her head didn't look as feminine as her body though. She had no face; she had a black visor vaguely shaped like a cactus, she had two thin spike structures just above the visor, three horns on the top of her head, positioned to make it look a little bit like she was wearing a crown and she had two spikes sticking out on the sides of her cheeks. She had long, thin, sharp claws and four spikes around her wrists that pointed forward. Her legs were designed to make her look like she was wearing high heel boots. Many of the prisoners were scared of Katherine, seeing as how she was as silent as a gargoyle and was always standing around watching them as if she was waiting for somebody to screw up so she could punish them for it. Right now, all the prisoners were out on the yard, doing nothing but wondering around like lost sheep as there was nothing to do in the yard, unlike an actual prison where the yard had exercise activities for the inmates. Katherine, as usual, was on guard, standing there as still as a statue and recording everything that was going on and transmitting it back to base so Eggman could see how things were going back at base whenever he was ready to see it. Much to the silent warden-bot's delight, a robo-officer, a big brutish robot coloured in a policeman deco and equipped with a handlebar light on it's back that looked like the kind you'd find on a police car, came up to her carrying a squirming prisoner by his arm. The inmate was a golden furred dog with cars longer then the average dog.

"Katherine, this-in-solent-pup-is-talk-ing-back-to-me." droned the officer "Assign-him-a-punish-ment-to-teach-him-a-lesson."

Katherine just played a previous recording of Dr. Eggman's voice she'd recorded before.

"Tear his vocal chords out!" said the recording that Katherine played to the robo-officer.

"Yes-warden." droned the robo-officer.

He carried the inmate into the prison building to carry out Katherine's assigned punishment. If Katherine had a face, she'd probably be grinning like a sadist right now as the silent but deadly fem-bot had an extremely sadistic personality underneath her armour. Before Katherine could get back to her duties, she heard a beeping noise in her head and she touched the side of her head to answer the call.

"Katherine? This is Alonzo speaking, do you read me?" came the snooty, posh-accented voice of Alonzo the Butler Bot.

Katherine made a noise that sounded like someone saying yes as a response.

"Dr. Eggman really should give you a voice Katherine." muttered Alonzo "Anyways; Eggman has given you a task to do warden-bot. You are to find the Northern Royal Fighters and kidnap their leader. Once you do that, bring her to the blockade. If her team-mates try to rescue their leader, kill them all. Understood?"

Katherine made the yes noise again. She switched off her comlink and wondered over to one of the robo-officers who was keeping a close eye on the prisoners. The robo-officer turned to Katherine and Katherine spoke to him with various recordings of other people's voices she'd gathered since her creation.

"I have a task. You are in charge until I get back." she said in five different recorded voices.

"Yes-Katherine, Thank-you-Katherine." said the robo-officer.

So Katherine left the Sentinel Blockade and set off to find the Northern Royal Fighters. She began to wonder if their leader was going to be fun to abuse just like the other prisoners in the blockade.

If so then Katherine was going to enjoy this ever so much…

Meanwhile, the Northern Royal Fighters had all returned to their homey little camp in Nekronopolis. After arriving back at the camp, Miranda informed Sonic and Royal HQ of the destruction of Eggman's factory in Black Acropolis, which Sonic was very impressed with and the Royal Fighters in Mobotropolis were pleased to hear such news from Miranda and her team. Right now, the team were sitting back and chilling out from their adventure in the Apocalypse Zone. Kari however, had decided to work on fixing Miranda's broken electro-prod. Metal Sonic had broken the weapon the time Sonic, Tails and Amy had come to fix him***** and Kari had made it her first priority to fix the weapon now she had the time at last. As Kari fixed the weapon, Miranda, Kate, Thunder and Bolt were sitting in deck chairs and chilling out. They could to with a good rest.

"Oh it feels good to relax." said Thunder with a sigh.

"I'll say it does Thunder." said Bolt "I could relax all day if I wanted too."

"Yeah, better not do it on a summer's day or you'll have one heck of a tan Bolt!" joked Thunder.

"We have fur Thunder, we can't get a tan!" laughed Bolt.

And with that, Thunder and Bolt both burst out into obnoxiously loud laughter that just seemed to annoy Miranda and Kate. Miranda grumbled loudly.

"Thunder, Bolt, can't you two morons be quiet for a few minutes?" moaned Miranda.

"Sorry Ma'Am." said Thunder and Bolt glumly.

"And don't call me Ma'Am." muttered Miranda.

"Sorry Miranda." said Thunder and Bolt again.

Miranda just huffed and lay back in her deckchair.

"Go easy on the boys Miranda, they're just having fun." said Kari gently as she began to replace some of the burnt circuitry in the electro-prod.

"I know Kari, I know." said Miranda with a sigh "I've just had a long history with boys who like to tell bad jokes and I've never been entertained by them the slightest. Still, boys will be boys after all as they say so I shouldn't be too hard on them."

"Oh Miranda, don't worry, we're OK with you not thinking we're that funny." said Thunder reassuringly "In all honesty, me and Bot really just tell jokes to make each other laugh, we don't really expect anyone else to laugh so we don't mind if you find us annoying."

"OK then boys." said Miranda with a kind smile "As long as you amuse each other, that's good enough for me."

"Thanks Miranda." said Thunder and Bolt.

Miranda smiled brightly at the two brothers. Unbeknownst to the team as they were talking, Katherine strode by their camp with her black visor on the alert for the Northern Royal Fighters. The Sentinel Blockade was in the Southern Border of Nekronopolis and Miranda's camp was not very far from the Southern Border so Katherine didn't really have much of a long walk to get to their camp. Katherine was keeping an eye out for the Northern Royal Fighters and just as she was passing their camp, she heard them all talking amongst each other. She stopped wondering by and she turned her head to one side to see their camp. Katherine took interest in the camp and quietly walked up to the camp. She kept low to the ground and crept as silently as possible towards the camp. She hid in one of the tents and began to eavesdrop on Miranda's conversation with Thunder, Bolt and Kari. Katherine recognized Miranda as the leader instantly as Eggman had given her all the info needed on the Royal Fighters. But instead of attacking immediately, she decided to see what they were talking about so she remained in the tent and listened on to their conversation.

"So Miranda, what do you plan on doing now?" asked Kate.

"Well Kate, our success today, which of course, had some heavy help from our good friend Sonic and his friends Tails and Amy, is one of the most successful moments of our career so I think we should document it and send it to the vaults." said Miranda "Let the Royal Fighters remember this day for years to come. After all, few have dared to enter Black Acropolis and we're some of the few that have not only dared, but survived it as well so this moment must be documented and remembered forever."

Katherine, who had heard everything, seemed interested on the words "documented" and "vaults" and she was recording everything she was hearing right now so what Miranda had just said had been recorded by Katherine. Katherine sent the recorded conversation over to Dr. Eggman back in Robotropolis and waited for his response on the subject matter.

Back in Robotropolis, Dr. Eggman had stopped his building work so he could see what Katherine was up to. He was in the back-up headquarters watching everything via visual contact through Katherine's visor and he got the recorded conversation between Miranda and Kate from the warden bot. Dr. Eggman played the message and listened carefully to what he had been sent.

"Well Kate, our success today, which of course, had some heavy help from our good friend Sonic and his friends Tails and Amy, is one of the most successful moments of our career so I think we should document it and send it to the vaults." the recording played to him "Let the Royal Fighters remember this day for years to come. After all, few have dared to enter Black Acropolis and we're some of the few that have not only dared, but survived it as well so this moment must be documented and remembered forever."

Dr. Eggman switched off the recording and stroked his moustache darkly.

"Documents eh? Vaults eh?" he mused to himself "This seems interesting. I must find out more about this."

"I bet these so-called "vaults" are very important." said Alonzo thoughtfully "Like maybe documents and data files on the R.F.S. Data files we can use against them that is."

"That is a thought Alonzo but we don't know for sure what these vaults are so we must kidnap that pest Miranda and extract that information from her." purred Dr. Eggman.

"I bet Katherine will get her to crack in no time at all." said Alonzo darkly "Katherine is an expert in extracting information after all, especially when it comes to interrogation."

"Yes Alonzo." said Dr. Eggman.

He pressed a button on the control pad and spoke into a comlink on the pad.

"Katherine. Kidnap Miranda and take her to the Sentinel Blockade for interrogation now." ordered Dr. Eggman "Make this your only priority until you succeed."

That meant Katherine would put even more effort into her mission and would be very hard to stop once she sprung into action…

Back in Nekronopolis, Katherine received Dr. Eggman's message and she decided to commence her mission now. Katherine stood up and prepared to leap out of the tent. While she was doing that, Miranda turned to Kari and asked her something.

"How goes your work Kari?" asked Miranda.

"It's gonna take a while but I'm not doing too bad Miranda." said Kari as she began to solder some new wires together and fit them into the electro-prod "Your weapon maybe finished by tomorrow if all goes well."

"That's lovely Kari." said Miranda "That electro-prod is a very powerful weapon, especially when used on robots. Pity it was broken at this moment, I could have used it on Mecha Rouge to slow her down and make our job easier."

"I wonder if Mecha Rouge made it out at all?" wondered Bolt "After all, didn't Sonic say she was a victim of roboticization?"

"He did." said Miranda "I wonder what this Rouge is like as a Mobian. Is she a good friend of Sonic's or just someone he knows?"

"I dunno." said Thunder "But I hope Sonic can de-roboticize her just like all the other poor Mobians who have been roboticized by that fat demon Dr. Eggman. It's horrible thinking of us Mobians being robots instead of the cute furry creatures we are now."

Then suddenly, Katherine shot out of the tent like a charging cheetah and she pounced straight onto Miranda. The fem-bot knocked the leather wearing mongoose out of her chair and the two rolled across the campsite in roly-poly. The two came to a halt with Katherine on top of Miranda and pinning her down but Miranda kicked Katherine off of her and sent her crashing near the campfire, which wasn't burning at all. Kari stopped what she was doing and she grabbed a crowbar to use as a weapon. Kate stood up and cracked her knuckles and Thunder and Bolt summoned a pair of lightening bolts to their hands. Katherine picked herself up and bared her sharp, thin, claws. Miranda picked herself up and stared at Katherine in wonder.

"What in Nekronopolis is that?" she gasped.

"An Eggman robot no doubt." said Kari with a brave face on "An unusual Eggman robot I must say. I've never seen a feminine Eggman robot before."

"Maybe that's Dr. Eggman's roboticized girlfriend!" joked Thunder.

"You idiot! Stop clowning around!" snapped Bolt, kicking Thunder in the backside "That robot means trouble and we're going to destroy it!"

Thunder rubbed his bottom and grumbled. Katherine bent down in a battle-ready stance and Miranda prepared to do battle as well. Kari stood beside her, her crowbar raised and ready.

"Who are you and why are you here?" asked Miranda.

Katherine didn't answer. Instead, she jumped into the air and spun around in mid-air like a drill-bit and hurtled towards Miranda and Kari. Miranda jumped back just as Katherine shot by her and Kari whacked the fem-bot with the crowbar as hard as she could. Katherine was sent crashing into the ground but the fem-bot wasn't

down for long. She picked herself up and held her hand out, palm facing Kari. Out of the palm of Katherine's hand shot a sharp, four bladed disc and it hurtled towards Kari. Kari ducked and the disc just skimmed her by the tips of her ginger hair. The disc was just a distraction though. After Kari straightened up, Katherine charged into Kari and whacked her with one hefty smack of her arm. Kari hurtled through the air in a rainbow arch and she landed straight on top of the workbench, knocking it over and sending the tools on the table flying everywhere. Thunder and Bolt retaliated by throwing a lightening bolt each at Katherine but the sadistic warden bot just deflected them by holding her arm up to shield herself. She held her hands out and fired some bladed discs at the chipmunks. Thunder and Bolt threw lightening bolts at the discs to stop them from hitting them and Katherine charged towards them before they could ready themselves for another attack. Before Katherine could reach them, Kate rammed the robot from the side and knocked her down onto the ground. Katherine made a very loud clang as she hit the ground and the robot's visor went fuzzy as if that move had severely distorted her mind momentarily. Kate ran over to Katherine, cracked her knuckles, and prepared to smash the fem-bot's head to pieces but Katherine fired a bladed-disc at Kate's shoulder. The disc skimmed Kate's shoulder, leaving a deep cut in it and the eagle screeched in pain. Katherine kangaroo kicked Kate in the gut and knocked her backwards and the robot picked herself up. Miranda kicked Katherine directly in the head and the robot's head was sent spinning. Miranda then proceeded to punch Katherine repeatedly in the body.

"Get out of my camp!" screamed Miranda and she punched Katherine as hard as she possibly could.

Katherine retaliated by punching back at Miranda. Miranda and Katherine were now in a mad punching battle with the two opponents punching each other all over their bodies as hard as they can as if they were in a boxing match. Thunder and Bolt decided to interfere with the boxing match by throwing thunder bolts at Katherine. The bolts struck Katherine in the back but they just pinged off her armour without harming her too much. Katherine pushed Miranda away, turned around and fired some discs at Thunder and Bolt again. Thunder and Bolt dodged the discs and

they threw more bolts at Katherine. Katherine dodged the bolts and did a drill-attack towards them. She hit the two chipmunks and sent them hurling through the air. Katherine came to a halt on her feet, only to get walloped by Kari's crowbar. Katherine was brought down on her back and Kari tried to smash Katherine's head with the crowbar but Katherine activated a force-field and shielded herself from the attack. Kari whacked the force-field and was gobsmacked to see that Katherine had a way of shielding herself. Katherine picked herself up and shut off the force-field. She snatched Kari's crowbar and tripped Kari up with it. If she had been ordered to kill the rat then she would happily do so right now but her orders were to kidnap Miranda, not kill anybody. Miranda saw that Katherine had Kari down and at her mercy so she ran over to help her friend but Katherine was ready for her. Miranda tried to punch Katherine but the fem-bot grabbed her arm before she could hit her. Then, without warning, Miranda was suddenly met with a very painful electrical attack that came out of Katherine's metal hand. Miranda screamed in pain as electricity surged up her body and the mongoose in the backless black shirt suddenly found herself feeling limp and falling down onto the ground unconscious. Katherine had knocked her out and now Miranda was knocked out, the fem-bot scooped her up and draped her on her shoulder. Kate, Thunder and Bolt ran up to Katherine in an attempt to save their beloved leader but Katherine activated her force-field and expanded it out at a surprising speed, blowing the three away and sending them crashing into a tent, bringing it straight down. Katherine was pleased to see her enemies were down and before they could get up, Katherine ran off at a speed that could rival and Olympic Sprinter with Miranda on her shoulder. Kari saw Katherine get away and the rat felt her heart tear in two like a ripped piece of paper as Katherine disappeared into the distance with Miranda on her shoulder.

"No!" she cried "That thing got Miranda! And now it's taking her away to presumably Eggman's base so he can roboticize her!"

Kari could do nothing more then sit on her knees and cry into her hands.

"Oh Miranda, I'm so sorry we couldn't stop that thing from kidnapping you!" she wailed.

As Kari sobbed into her hands, Kate picked herself up and out of the wrecked tent that she and the chipmunks had crashed into. She picked up Thunder and Bolt, who were a little dazed and confused but alright and they shook themselves off. Kate put them down and Thunder and Bolt exchanged pitying glances at each other.

"Well, we failed." said Bolt sadly "That fem-bot has just kidnapped Miranda and has gotten away."

"I bet she's taking her to Eggman so he can robotize her." said Thunder gloomily.

"It's pronounced "roboticize." corrected Bolt "And I bet that fem-bot thing is doing just what you said. But why just Miranda in particular? Why are we spared?"

"Maybe Eggman hates Miranda more then us." suggested Thunder.

"Or maybe he thinks that by roboticizing Miranda, he'll inflict more pain on us then just roboticizing us all at once." suggested Kate.

"Either way, it's nothing good." said Bolt "We must save Miranda now!"

"And how exactly are we going to do that?" demanded Thunder crossly "We don't know where Eggman is and we don't know where Miranda is being taken!"

"There is a way of finding that out." said Kari, who was listening to what the chipmunks were saying and had just thought of something "Miranda's armband is really a tracking beacon. She wears so that we can find her should she ever get lost remember?"

"Oh." said Thunder and Bolt together "We forgot about that."

"But what good will that be to us?" muttered Kari, her ears drooping down and her face falling into a grim expression again as if she was about to break down again "Miranda will be roboticized before we can even reach her. It's hopeless. Miranda is going to be a robot slave for that horrible Dr. Eggman guy and there's nothing we can do about it."

"Hello there Mobians." came a deep but youthful sounding voice.

Kari's heart leapt into her throat in surprise at that voice and she turned around to see who the voice belonged to. Kate, Thunder and Bolt looked at what Kari was looking at and they stared in awe at the stranger. A black hedgehog with red stripes on his quills, golden rings around his wrists, a white tuft of fur on his chest and rocket shoes stood before them with a serious expression on his face. He had his arms folded and he looked like he was ready for action or something like that.

"My name is Shadow the Hedgehog." said the hedgehog "And you appear to have an Eggman problem…"

Footnotes:

***See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 72**

**** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 60-61**

***** As remembered in *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 63…**

****** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 66 for the whole ordeal!**

******* See *STH: Heroes of Mobius:* Story 70**

Bet you didn't see THAT coming did ya? Shadow the Hedgehog returns! But why is he here and what does he want? Will he help the Northern Royal Fighters save Miranda? And will Eggman get the information he wants from Miranda? Tune in next time on* Sonic the Hedgehog: Tales from Mobius *...Read and Review.

Tune back into* Heroes of Mobius *to see the next part of the Rights for the Land saga!

The Sentinel Blockade 2

Arc 8: The Sentinel Blockade

Takes place after Story 72 and between Stories 73-75

Part 2

No one should have the misfortune of being captured by an Eggman robot and taken to the Sentinel Blockade as a prisoner of the Eggman Empire. Unfortunately, Miranda Mongoose of the Northern Royal Fighters ended up having that misfortune. The prison warden-bot, Katherine, had come to her camp, beaten up her and her team, and then taken her to the Sentinel Blockade as Dr. Eggman wanted some information from her. Upon arrival at the prison, Miranda was fitted with a sphere cuff, a silver sphere the size of a football that clamped around your wrists like handcuffs, and Katherine took her inside the main building of the blockade. All the prisoners in the blockade just stared at Miranda, wondering what Dr. Eggman possibly wanted the long-haired mongoose for and what horrible punishments awaited her. Katherine dragged Miranda all the way into the building and into a dark room with large structures shaped a little like cannon barrels hanging from the ceiling. There weren't many distinguishing features in the room other then those structures. This was a prison cell and interrogations took place in this room. Katherine put Miranda underneath a pair of barrels and she pressed a button on the wall. Two holding lasers extended down from the barrels and around Miranda's sphere cuff. The holding lasers rose Miranda's arms up over her head and they lifted her about a foot of the floor. Miranda was now hanging off the floor by her arms, a very painful situation to be in when captured. Miranda just grunted and ignored the strain in her arms. She glared angrily at Katherine, who only stared back at her with her emotionless black visor.

"OK you fiend, why have you gone to the trouble of kidnapping me and bringing me here?" demanded Miranda angrily.

"I've gone to the trouble of kidnapping you Miranda because I have a few questions to ask you." Katherine said with the voice of Dr. Eggman.

Her black visor was alit with an image of Dr. Eggman's face but due to the shape of the visor it wasn't a complete image. Miranda narrowed her eyes into evil slits at the image of Dr. Eggman.

"Dr. Eggman!" she growled "How did I fail to guess you were behind this?"

"Maybe you just didn't have your thinking cap on Miranda." sneered Dr. Eggman.

"So why have you sent this robot to kidnap me then?" asked Miranda, looking up at her arms and the holding lasers that kept them above her head.

"Because she picked up on an interesting bit of information when she spied on you before making her move." explained Dr. Eggman "Katherine, play the audio clip you recorded."

Katherine obeyed and the image of Dr. Eggman switched back to the blackness her visor usually is. She then played the sound clip that she had recorded when spying on Miranda earlier.

"Well Kate, our success today, which of course, had some heavy help from our good friend Sonic and his friends Tails and Amy, is one of the most successful moments of our career so I think we should document it and send it to the vaults." played the recording "Let the Royal Fighters remember this day for years to come. After all, few have dared to enter Black Acropolis and we're some of the few that have not only dared, but survived it as well so this moment must be documented and remembered forever."

Miranda's blood froze and her heart missed a beat. Dr. Eggman had heard her mentioning the vaults! The mongoose suddenly began to feel nervous. Was Eggman planning to interrogate her on further information on the vaults? Katherine's visor switched back to the image of Dr. Eggman.

"Katherine heard you mentioning something about vaults and documents." explained Dr. Eggman "Would you care to be a good girl and tell me what you meant by vaults and documents?"

"First off Dr. Eggman, I am a woman, not a girl, and second off, if you think I am going to reveal such vital information to scum like you then you've got a death wish!" yelled Miranda "I would rather rot in this cell then tell you anything!"

"I don't like your attitude young lady." said Dr. Eggman coldly "Those who stand up to me shall be severely punished. Katherine, torture her and get this mongoose to crack like a broken bone!"

"Go ahead, do your worst!" dared Miranda "No robot shall ever break me!"

Katherine switched off the image of Dr. Eggman and she rose her hand up. Miranda just kept a straight face on and dared Katherine to do her worst to her. Katherine strode up to Miranda and she pressed her long, thin, sharp claws against Miranda's tummy. She then activated a very painful electric shock from her wrist the surged up her claws and onto Miranda's body. Miranda was now being painfully electrocuted by the sadistic warden bot and she screamed loud enough to break the sound barrier. If Katherine had a face, she'd probably being smiling wickedly at the chained up mongoose she was torturing right now. If this didn't get Miranda to crack then Katherine didn't know what to do to make her talk…

Meanwhile in Nekronopolis, Miranda's team mates Kari the Rat, Kate the Eagle and the chipmunk brothers Thunder and Bolt had ended up getting a surprise visit from a strange new Mobian. It was a black hedgehog with red stripes on its spines, red eyes, gold rings around its wrists, gloves and hover shoes. This Mobian was of course, the notorious Shadow the Hedgehog, a genetic experiment with a lost purpose and no memory of his creator. He had shown up out of nowhere and now he was face-to-face with the Northern Royal Fighters.

"My name is Shadow the Hedgehog." Shadow introduced "And you

appear to have an Eggman problem."

Kari didn't know what to think of this. Should she answer him or tell him to go away as he didn't look like a very friendly Mobian? Then again, he seemed interested in the fact that she and her team were having an Eggman problem so that must mean he was on the good side. Nervously, Kari answered Shadow.

H…Hi there…uh…Shadow." she said slowly "What…brings you here?"

"I was just passing by and I overheard you talking about Dr. Eggman so I took interest and decided to stop by and see what the talk was about." said Shadow in his deep, chilling voice "Before we discuss that, may I have your names you four?"

"Sure." said Kari, feeling a little less nervous about Shadow now.

"My name's Thunder and this is my brother Bolt." introduced Thunder.

"You're a bit of a dark fella aren't ya?" asked Bolt "I can see why your mommy called you Shadow; you're like a walking, living shadow!"

And with that Thunder and Bolt began to laugh obnoxiously like they usually did. Shadow just ignored them and he kept a straight face on and his arms folded. Kate grabbed Thunder and Bolt's heads and she bashed them together to shut the wannabe comedians up. Thunder and Bolt stopped laughing and they lay on the ground dazed and confused.

"So sorry about Thunder and Bolt, they love to kid around Shadow." said Kari with a weak smile and a nervous giggle.

"I can see that." said Shadow "Just a pity for them I'm not much of a humour guy."

"You certainly don't look it." said Kari "Anyway, this is Kate the Eagle." she said, pointing to Kate who just stood there silent as a statue and completely motionless "She doesn't talk much so don't try to stir up a conversation with her. And my name is Kari." she said,

motioning to herself "I am a rat and please, for the love of Mobius, don't start with all that nonsense on rats traditionally being nasty, sneaky and evil, I had too much of that growing up."

"Why would I do that?" asked Shadow, puzzled as to why Kari was suddenly acting like that.

"Because anyone I met treated me this way." said Kari with a sad face on. She put her arms around herself and looked down at the ground "We rats have a bad reputation amongst the Mobian race. Most rats are usually sneaky, evil, bandits, robbers and sneak thieves. Very few rats are born with a heart and soul such as myself so anyone who sees a rat instantly thinks it's going to be a bad guy. Throughout my childhood I was constantly hammered with this tradition and nobody was willing to trust me except my family of course. Anyone I was with just gave me dirty looks as if…they were waiting for me to stab them in the back or something. I felt torn by the whole ordeal and very appalled that people really let tradition cloud their judgement like that and they couldn't be bothered to know me properly and see I am not like all those other rats. That's why I'm expecting you to start putting grief on me Shadow."

"I see." said Shadow, not really that touched by Kari's sad little story "I never knew that because I am not one of you. I don't even think I'm from this planet so I don't know anything about you Mobians."

"You're…not one of us?" blurted Kari, suddenly feeling nervous again "Then why do you look like one of us then?"

"I don't know." said Shadow "I don't know why I look like I belong on this planet. All I know is I am a genetic experiment with a lost purpose and no memories of my creation."

"A genetic experiment?" mused Kari "Well at least you're better looking then most genetic experiments I've seen before…so, you say you have a lost purpose Shadow?" she asked.

"I do." said Shadow "I can't remember anything other then who I am and what happened since my awakening. I was fooled into thinking that Dr. Eggman was my creator after Dr. Eggman found me and took me in*. Thanks to my blue faker Sonic the Hedgehog, Eggman

was exposed as a fraud** and I left him. I've been going my own way since then, searching for answers to my past and who my real creator is. I've had no luck so far but I will find out who I really am some time soon and I won't rest until I do."

"Interesting." said Kari "So I guess that's why you showed an interest in us having an Eggman problem, you've had a bad time with him before."

"Correct." said Shadow, clenching his fists as if the very memory of Dr. Eggman left a bad image in his brain "I will make that fat man suffer for lying to me like this! I was merciful the last time but next time I meet him, I won't be merciful!"

Kari began to think for a moment. If Shadow had a bad history with Dr. Eggman then maybe she could convince the hedgehog to help her and the team rescue Miranda from Dr. Eggman. Kari then had a bright idea. For it to work though they needed Shadow to help them and hopefully, the rat would be able to convince Shadow enough to get him to help her and her team.

"So Shadow, since you don't like Dr. Eggman, would you care to help us with our Eggman problem?" asked Kari sweetly.

"What is your Eggman problem like?" asked Shadow.

"We are a team of Royal Fighters." explained Kari "And Dr. Eggman has kidnapped our leader, Miranda Mongoose. If we don't rescue her in time, Eggman will roboticize her or maybe do something worse then that so will you please help us? Please?"

Shadow thought on that subject for a moment. On the one hand, he had better things to do then save a team's leader so this would be a waste of his precious time. On the other hand, he did have a grudge on Dr. Eggman and helping save Miranda Mongoose would provide him a perfect opportunity to get his own back on the fat man. Not to mention he was the ultimate life form, he didn't age and he was immortal so he had all the time in the universe to find answers so sparing some time wouldn't be much of a problem for an ageless being such as himself. Shadow's mind was made up, he would do this mission.

"I will help you Kari." said Shadow softly "But I'm only doing this to get revenge on Dr. Eggman. Once your leader is saved and Eggman is beaten, I will be off on my quest again and you will not see me again."

"Fair enough." said Kari brightly "Before we get started Shadow, what kind of power do you have? Are you strong? Are you powerful?"

"I am very powerful Kari." said Shadow with a cocky smirk on his face "I am the Ultimate Life form in fact. I have all the powers of Sonic the Hedgehog, no doubt you know who he is, and I have Chaos powers such as Chaos Spear and Chaos Blast so you will feel very fortunate to have me on your side Kari."

"I think I feel fortunate already." said Kari with a wide grin on her pretty face "So, let's go and save Miranda from Dr. Eggman's evil clutches!"

"Do you even know WHERE your team leader is?" asked Shadow doubtfully.

"Miranda wears a tracking beacon so we'll be able to find her." said Kari, reaching behind her ear and pulling something out "And we'll find her with this little device I built myself. This will tell us where Miranda is and we'll find her that way."

"I just hope she's not already being roboticized as we speak." muttered Kate "If she does get roboticized, I'll tear Eggman's head off!" she yelled, clasping her hand around her fist.

Kari peered at the device she was holding. The device was as big as a matchbox and it had a little screen showing where Miranda was and displaying her coordinates. If her beacon was still operational then that meant she was still alive and not yet roboticized.

"Well her beacon's displaying her coordinates so she can't have been roboticized yet." said Kari "Anything mechanical usually explodes when it's roboticized so there's a chance she hasn't been roboticized yet."

"Then let's find your leader before Eggman does roboticize her." said Shadow, scooping Kari up bridal style much to the amazement of Kari "Where is your leader?"

"Um…she's twenty-nine clicks to the south of here." said Kari "We should be there in matter of…"

Before Kari could finish what she was saying, Shadow took off at top speed on his rocket shoes, startling Kari and almost making her drop the device. Kate grabbed Thunder and Bolt with her talons and quickly flew after Shadow and Kari. Kari held on tight as Shadow sped through the plains, skating across the ground on his rocket shoes. Kari could hardly believe how fast Shadow was moving.

"Wowee! You're as fast as Sonic!" squealed Kari excitedly.

"Wrong, I'm FASTER then Sonic." crowed Shadow "We'll find your leader in no time with my super speed."

Shadow sped on through the plains with Kari in his arms and Kate following him with Thunder and Bolt in tow. Dr. Eggman would be in for quite a shock once Shadow finally arrived on the scene and got his vengeance on him…

Meanwhile at the Sentinel Blockade, Katherine had just finished another round of electro-torture on Miranda. She withdrew her hand away from Miranda's tummy and stopped shocking her, leaving Miranda's pained screams to die down and be replaced by panting and gasping. The mongoose coughed and spluttered, relieved that the shocking had stopped, but it would only carry one once again as Eggman strived to find out what Miranda meant by vaults. Dr. Eggman spoke once again.

"I can see you're not enjoying this pain are you my dear?" he purred wickedly "Well there's only you who can make the pain stop Miranda. Just tell me what I want to know and Katherine will spare you anymore pain."

Miranda just glared at Eggman's face that was displayed on

Katherine's visor.

"Forget it…Eggman!" croaked Miranda with a heavy, throaty cough "I…am not…willing to betray all I've stood for these…past months!"

"Do you want Katherine to hurt you again?" asked Dr. Eggman coldly.

"I would rather…let Katherine kill me then become a traitor!" retorted Miranda "So do yourself a favour and give up, you're…not getting anything from me!"

"Oh I will Miranda, I can assure you I will." said Dr. Eggman with a dark grin on his face "Katherine, let her have it again, increase your voltage to make it worse!"

Katherine obeyed and she raised her metallic hand. She advanced towards Miranda and was about to let her have it once again. Miranda was not about to let a fem-bot torture her again so she began to swing herself back and forth slightly. Katherine reached forward and was about to electrocute her again until Miranda swung bother her legs forward and kicked her straight in the face. Katherine found herself tumbling over onto her back with a heavy clang. Miranda smirked at the downed robot, pleased with her powerful kick. Katherine picked herself up and she felt her metal face. Miranda had cracked her visor with that kick. The very idea that Miranda had cracked her visor made Katherine's circuits buzz and whirr in rage. Dr. Eggman couldn't really see through Katherine's visor properly now it was cracked. The fat scientist with the bushy moustache fumed to himself.

"You cracked Katherine's visor." he said "How rude. I'll send you the bill for the damage later though, we've got more pressing matters at hand. It seems Katherine should keep her distance from you Miranda to avoid anymore damage. Katherine, use a different method of torture."

The sadistic warden-bot nodded and switched off the image of Dr. Eggman, leaving her cracked visor pitch black now. Katherine walked passed the bound up Miranda and went to the corner of the cell. Miranda just kept her face ahead of her, not really bothered

about what Katherine was up to. Katherine pulled a box-like compartment out of the wall and she rummaged in it. The compartment contained various instruments of torture including tasers, saw blades, blowtorches, flamethrowers, swords and whips. Katherine selected a whip from the box and she put the box back into the wall. Katherine then wondered back over to Miranda, this time from behind. She pulled the whip straight and it made a little noise that Miranda recognized easily.

"So you're going to whip me are you?" she scoffed "Why do I care? You still won't break me."

Katherine ignored Miranda's gloating and she raised the whip over her shoulder. Then with a lightening-fast motion, she swung the whip at Miranda and the whip wrapped around her torso. This kind of whip wasn't only used for hitting people; it could wrap around the victim and then burn them severely, inflicting even more pain on the victim. The moment the whip wrapped around Miranda, the whip suddenly became incredibly hot as if it was a radiator heating up and Miranda ended up getting a nasty burn as if somebody was pressing a bunch of light bulbs against her. Miranda clenched her teeth and tried her hardest not to scream as the searing heat of the whip began to surge up her body. Katherine pulled the whip back and it unwrapped from around Miranda's torso. Miranda let out the breath she had been holding when trying not to scream and she panted heavily. Underneath her backless shirt, she'd probably have a nasty red ring around her torso from that painful burn. Katherine just stood there motionless and waited for Miranda to do something. Miranda didn't do anything; she just remained quiet and didn't move. She decided that it was pointless yelling things at Katherine as the warden bot wouldn't listen to her. Katherine fumed to herself, seeing that her burning whip hadn't worked on Miranda. Katherine decided that if electrocuting her and burning her wasn't going to work then perhaps she would succumb to being beaten up. Katherine wondered over to the wall and she pressed a button on it. The holding lasers keeping Miranda's arms aloft suddenly switched off and the mongoose fell down onto the floor. She felt a huge sigh of relief as her arms lowered down and she was now back on her feet. Being held aloft by your arms was a very painful experience after all. But Miranda knew that Katherine wasn't going to just let her go, she

knew that more pain was coming her way. Katherine strode up to Miranda and hoisted her up to her full height. Miranda stood there, powerless to do anything as she had been shocked and burnt and her hands were restrained by the sphere cuff. Katherine then drew her arm back and back-handed Miranda right across the room and into a wall. Miranda hit the wall at full force and she felt like her entire skeleton had just shattered like a broken glass window. Miranda lay against the wall, groaning like a ghoul. Katherine just advanced on Miranda and seized her by the throat. Miranda gagged as Katherine's long metal fingers wrapped around her neck. Katherine hoisted Miranda up to her height and pinned her against the wall. Miranda tried to free herself from Katherine's grip but the robot was just too strong for her.

"Please…let me go…" wheezed Miranda hoarsely.

Katherine obliged but not in the way Miranda was hoping. Katherine threw Miranda over her shoulder and left her to crash into the floor face-first. Miranda groaned loudly as she slowed to a halt after a slight skid across the floor. Her face felt like she'd just been walloped by a sledgehammer. Katherine advanced on Miranda again and she grabbed the mongoose by her hair. Miranda was then hauled onto her feet and Katherine looked the mongoose in the eye with her cracked visor. Miranda just glowered at him.

"You…will…never…break…me…" she gasped weakly "No… matter…how hard…you…pummel me…"

Katherine just threw her across the room once again and sent her crashing into another wall. Katherine would continued this onslaught of pain and suffering whether Miranda liked it or not. She would get the mongoose to crack even if she malfunctioned trying to do so…

After a short while, Shadow the Hedgehog and Kari the Rat arrived at the insidious prison blockade. They came to a halt behind some large boulders that stood not very high above the Sentinel Blockade and they peered from behind the boulders to see what was going on down from where they were. Kate the Eagle and the chipmunk brothers Thunder and Bolt touched down behind Shadow and Kari

and they looked down at the blockade to see what was going on. It didn't take them long to figure out they were looking at a prison blockade and they could easily tell it belonged to Dr. Eggman due to the Eggman robots in the blockade who were man-handling and mistreating the Mobian prisoners that were all over the yard. Seeing the poor Mobians being treated badly by the robots made Kari's tail quiver with rage. Shadow wasn't particularly fond of the sight either, unable to believe he used to work for such a sick, twisted man before.

"So is this where your leader is?" asked Shadow.

Kari peered at the device and prayed that it would tell her Miranda wasn't in the blockade. The device however, showed that Miranda was indeed in the Sentinel Blockade much to Kari's dismay. The rat fumed and she put the device back behind her ear.

"Unfortunately, she is." said Kari "The device says Miranda is in that prison blockade down there.

"Well that's not very nice!" grumbled Thunder "Dr. Eggman has his own prison so he can arrest Mobians for doing heroic deeds! That guy is such a meanie!"

"I agree Thunder." muttered Bolt "What I wouldn't give to zap his bottom for all the evil he's done!"

"Well boys, you'll get the chance." said Kari "Because I have a plan."

"Explain it quickly then so I can get my vengeance on the doctor." said Shadow bluntly with his red eyes burning angrily.

Kari gathered everybody around and explained the plan to her team mates in low whispers so nobody would hear them.

"OK here's what we do." whispered Kari "Shadow stays where he is while we create a diversion which will start with Kate shoving these boulders down onto the blockade, then when the heavy artillery comes in, we'll surrender and let them arrest us. Then when Kate gives the signal, Shadow will come in and cause another diversion while we rescue Miranda. Then we all run for it before we can get

caught."

"That's a very good plan." applauded Thunder "It's bound to work. Miranda's as good as saved!"

"How will Kate signal me?" asked Shadow.

"She'll wave her wing to you." said Kari "Now Kate, push those boulders down."

Kate obeyed and she cracked her knuckles. Kate faced the boulders they were hiding behind and she drew her arm back. She was about to punch the boulders down the ledge and towards the Sentinel Blockade…but Shadow got in the way and beat her to the punch. He punched the boulders down just as Kate punched forward and the boulders all began to fall down the ledge and roll towards the blockade. Kate folded her arms and fumed at Shadow. Shadow just glared at her back.

"What?" he snapped.

Kate just said nothing and eased her steely gaze. She wasn't happy that Shadow stole her thunder but she didn't mind too much, at least the boulders had been pushed towards the blockade just as planned, that was all that mattered. The large boulders made a loud thunderous noise as they rolled and rolled towards the Sentinel Blockade. The robo-officers on duty heard the boulders rolling down the hill and they looked to their left to see the large rocks coming towards the prison walls. The robo-officers all freaked and drew their weapons out, ready to blast the rocks to pieces. The boulders all crashed into the wall at the same time and the sheer force of the enormous rocks destroyed the section of the steel wall that kept the prisoners inside the blockade. The wall now had an enormous gap in it and the boulders didn't stop there. They continued to roll across the yard. The prisoners all screamed and ran for their lives as the boulders rolled around the yard. Some of the robo-officers were unlucky enough to get crushed by the giant rocks. Any robo-officers still standing blasted the boulders to pieces with their laser rifles. The boulders were reduced to large pebbles and stones after one measly blast from the robo-officer's rifles. Now the boulders were destroyed, the relieved prisoners decided to pick the perfect moment

to run for their lives and flee through the destroyed wall section. The robo-officers that were still intact saw the fleeing prisoners and they instantly began to open fire on them, with their guns set to stun mode this time. But they didn't get a chance to shoot anybody for the moment they began shooting at the fleeing prisoners, Thunder and Bolt summoned a bunch of lightening bolts to their hands and they threw them at the robo-officers. The robo-officers were startled to suddenly be under attack from such an unexpected enemy and they began to fall back as lightening bolts rained down towards them. Kari, Kate, Thunder and Bolt all charged down towards the Sentinel Blockade and joined in the commotion that was going on down in the blockade. The fleeing prisoners all filed out of the yard as fast as they could and they ran past the Northern Royal Fighters, many of them yelling "Thanks a lot guys!" and "You rock!" and "You saved us all!" as they ran for it. The Northern Royal Fighters ran into the blockade while Shadow, as instructed, stayed put and watched the fight unfold at the bottom of the rocky hill he was standing upon. He was impressed with how well the plan was working so far. If this kept up, his revenge on Dr. Eggman was ascertain. The robo-officers on duty began shooting at Kari, Kate and the chipmunk brothers, their guns set to kill now, but their aim was atrocious and they missed every shot they fired. Kari leaped into the air, did an amazing somersault in the air and landed foot-first on a robo-officer's head. The robo-officer titled forward and Kari jumped off of it and onto another officer's head. The robo-officer held its rifle in a club position and it tried to whack Kari with the rifle but she jumped off before it could hit her so it ended up breaking its rifle after whacking itself. The other robo-officer tried to shoot Kari but Kate grabbed it in a chokehold and crushed its neck, killing the robot instantly. Another robo-officer tried to shoot Kate but Kate spun around at lightening speed and she socked the robot directly in the face, knocking its head clean off its body. Another robot-officer appeared behind Kate, this one armed with a club instead of a rifle, and it tried to whack Kate on the head but Kate punched it in the chest. Her fist went straight through the unfortunate robo-officer's chest and she ripped its inner circuits out, killing it instantly and leaving it to lie on the ground in a sad miserable wreck. A robo-officer shot at Kate but the eagle ducked, the blast skimming the top of her head and singeing some of her feathers. Kate retaliated by throwing one of the dead robo-officers at the officer that singed her

feathers. The wreckage of the dead robo-officer hit the robo-officer with deadly force and the robo-officer was knocked off its feet. As for Thunder and Bolt, they were just dodging blasts and throwing thunder bolts at the robo-officers. The robo-officers kept missing them due to their bad aim and Thunder and Bolt hit them every time as they were pretty good aimers when they wanted to be. Kari watched the fight with satisfaction, pleased to see everything was going according to plan. Miranda was as good as saved right now…

Meanwhile in the cell room, Miranda found herself being slammed onto the floor once again by Katherine. Katherine had beaten Miranda almost to a pulp and the mongoose was finding it incredibly hard to remain conscious. She looked dreadful too. Her clothes had cuts in places, her arms had cuts on them, her nose was bleeding, her lip was bleeding and one of her eyes was bruised and had turned purple in colour. If Miranda took anymore of this abuse, chances are her injuries would claim her life. Miranda lay on the floor, gasping and breathing heavily while grimacing in pain from her injuries. Katherine advanced on her and glared down at her with her cracked visor. Katherine decided to give Miranda one last smack and then question her on those vaults Eggman was interested in. Katherine raised her arm and prepared to smack Miranda once again until a call from a robo-officer interrupted her. Katherine answered the call by touching the side of her head.

"Katherine! Come quick!" screamed the robo-officer "The blockade's been compromised and the prisoners have escaped! We need your assistance…"

He was cut off by Kate the Eagle who just promptly smashed it to pieces with her powerful fists. Katherine switched off her comlink and she grabbed Miranda by her throat. She carried the battered mongoose and carried her over to the holding laser generators that were built into the ceiling. Katherine put Miranda under the barrels and she switched the lasers on. Miranda was now hanging off the floor by her arms once again. The mongoose could do nothing but hang her head and pant heavily as her injuries continued to hurt and make her feel weak. Katherine then left the cell and went onto the yard to deal with the commotion outside…

Outside, all the robo-officers had been destroyed by the Northern Royal Fighters but back-up was on its way and Kari could sense it so she gathered her team mates around for a quick discussion before they let themselves get arrested.

"The plan is going like clockwork." said Kari "The prisoners of the blockade are all free and we've aided them in their getaway. I bet back-up's going to arrive any second now so once they demand for us to surrender, do so."

"OK Kari." said Thunder.

"And when Kate gives the signal, Shadow can come and do even more damage to this place." said Bolt "And while he's doing that, we can rescue Miranda! When should Kate give the signal Kari?" asked Bolt.

"Not too soon, we need to wait a while so that the robots who work here will be led into a false sense of security." said Kari "Wait about fifteen minutes and then Kate can signal Shadow."

"Right." said Thunder and Bolt together.

"Excellent." said Kari brightly "Miranda's going to be so proud of us when we walk out of here with her."

Then suddenly, the doors to the blockade opened up and out walked Katherine with a hundred robo-officers following her. Kari, Kate and the chipmunk brothers bent down in battle-ready stances and they prepared to do battle. Shadow watched the scene from the hilltop but he didn't rush into battle. He was told to wait until he was signalled and Shadow was not the kind of person who disobeyed an order so he waited, watching the whole scene down at the bottom of the hill. The robo-officers all surrounded the Northern Royal Fighters with their guns primed and ready and Katherine stood forward with her long metallic claws bared. Kari glared at Katherine angrily, she recognized her immediately. She was the robot who kidnapped Miranda and she was going to pay for it. But that would have to wait as they had a plan and that did not involve Kari turning Katherine

into a scrap pile.

"Do not move." boomed the robo-officers "You four are under arrest for trespassing in the Sentinel Blockade and freeing the prisoners. Remain still or we will let you have it full blast."

Kari raised her arms in forfeit. Kate, Thunder and Bolt copied her.

"We surrender." lied Kari.

Katherine stood forward and seized Kari by the arm. She then clamped a sphere cuff around Kari's wrists, the rat yelping as she was roughly coughed. Kate, Thunder and Bolt were soon fitted with sphere cuffs too by the surrounding robo-officers. Katherine stared into Kari's eyes with her emotionless black visor. She then began to play several pre-recorded voices to the rat.

"You look familiar *you do.* **I battled you** earlier when I KIDNAPPED *your leader* **didn't I** ?" the voices she was playing said to Kari.

"Yes you did." said Kari "Take me to Miranda please, I wish to see her again before you do whatever it is you wanna do with me."

Katherine took the request in lightly and she obeyed Kari's wishes. She took Kari into the building, leaving the robo-officers to deal with Kate, Thunder and Bolt. The robo-officers forced Kate, Thunder and Bolt down onto their bottoms and they kept their rifles pointed at them.

"Stay down." they ordered "You'll remain here until Katherine decides what to do with you."

The captured fighters just did as they were told and they remained sitting on the ground, waiting for the right time to signal Shadow to cause a diversion…

Inside, Katherine took Kari into Miranda's cell and she steered her towards some holding laser generators. The moment they walked into the cell, Kari caught sight of Miranda and the mere sight of her best friend and team leader made Kari feel sick. Miranda looked like

she'd been in a gang fight and she looked to be in a terrible condition too, barely remaining conscious. Kari's blood boiled and she gritted her teeth. The rat seldom got angry but when she did, she had a drastic personality change that only lasted until she calmed down.

"You monster!" she screamed, swinging her cuffed arms at Katherine "WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?"

The mere sound of Kari's voice woke Miranda up and the mongoose weakly lifted her head up to see what was happening.

"Um…Kari…?" she whispered hoarsely.

Katherine grabbed Kari's shoulders and she pushed her underneath the holding laser generators. Katherine switched on the laser generators and holding lasers wrapped around Kari's sphere-cuff and they raised her arms above her head. Kari soon found herself hanging off the floor by her arms and the rat winced as a sudden wave of pain surged up her arms. Kari glared down at Katherine, her temper still flaring.

"When I get out of these cuffs, you are going to be one sorry scrap pile you demon of science!" she screamed.

"Oh really Kari, that's no way to talk to my dear Katherine." purred the voice of Dr. Eggman from Katherine's face.

Katherine's face lit up with an image of Dr. Eggman's face. The fat scientist grinned evilly at the bound up Kari.

"Well Katherine's been a lucky girl today hasn't she?" he sneered "Not only did she capture Miranda of the Northern Royal Fighters, she's captured her team as well! If only I had luck like that." he muttered.

"Wh…what?" blurted Miranda, finally waking up and realizing that Kari was right next to her, hanging by her arms off the floor like she was.

"Dr. Eggman." muttered Kari "You're uglier then I imagined."

"Really? I never took you Mobian mongrels to be a poor judge of human appearances." sneered Dr. Eggman "I'm much more attractive looking then you think."

"Yeah right." muttered Kari "So why have you kidnapped our leader then?"

"Well Katherine overheard her talking about something and I want to know what it is." said Dr. Eggman "But she won't talk. Perhaps you'll talk instead." he purred in a dark tone "I bet you're easier to break then Miranda is."

"I'm not telling you anything!" screeched Kari "Now let me go so I can show you what I think of you precious Katherine!"

"You must think I come from Planet Stupid if you think I'm going to do that." sneered Dr. Eggman "Katherine will give you a minute to get comfortable and then the interrogation can start. I bet you'll end up looking worse then your precious leader Kari."

And with that Katherine turned her back on Kari and walked out of the room with Dr. Eggman's hooting laughter ringing out of her head. Katherine left the cell and the door closed, trapping Miranda and Kari inside. The two girls were alone in the cell, hanging by their arms and with no way of escaping. Miranda broke the silence that loomed for a second by speaking to Kari.

"Kari…cough, cough!" croaked Miranda "You…You came to… rescue me didn't you?"

"I did Miranda." said Kari softly "You know I had to. You stood up for me when everybody judged me by what I am on the outside so I decided to return the favour and get you out of here."

"You…shouldn't have come." said Miranda hoarsely "You'll just end up…getting the torture…I've received now…"

"Why did that beastly robot do that to you?" asked Kari in a startled tone "What does Dr. Eggman want?"

"Information…on the Royal Fighter…vaults." wheezed Miranda with a cough "He…overheard me…mentioning the vaults…earlier and

now…he wants to know…what I meant…by vaults…"

"The Royal Fighter Vaults?" squealed Kari in alarm "Oh my gosh! If Eggman finds out about them, we're goners! Those vaults contain…"

"Sssssshhhhh!" hissed Miranda "Someone in this…blockade…might be listening to us in secret! Keep…your voice down!"

There were no secret listeners right now but Miranda couldn't be too cautious as she and Kari were in villainous territory so she felt it would be best if they talked quietly about such secret information.

"Sorry." said Kari, lowering her voice to a whisper "Those vaults contain information on the R.F.S. and all the teams currently present. Eggman can't be allowed to find out about the vaults or Mobius is his!"

"I…know…" grunted Miranda "That's why…I refused…to talk…and you…will have to…do the same…"

"No I won't." said Kari with a sly grin on her face "You see, I planned my capture."

"You…did?" asked Miranda "Please…explain what you mean…"

"We got a meeting from a black hedgehog named Shadow who's very much like Sonic only with black fur and red stripes and he's helping us rescue you." explained Kari "I planned that we cause a diversion, which me, Kate, Thunder and Bolt did and we ended up freeing all the prisoners, and then we let ourselves get arrested so we can save you. Kate will give Shadow the signal and Shadow will cause a riot to distract everybody and then Kate, Thunder and Bolt will get us outta here. Brilliant isn't it?"

"Kari…I knew you were brighter…then all those…other rats out there." said Miranda with a warm smile on her beaten face "I'm so glad…you're on my team…"

"Thank you Miranda." said Kari gently "I'm glad I joined the R.F.S., my life has improved so much since then."

"So…when will Kate…tell this um…"Shadow"…to attack?" asked Miranda.

"I asked her to wait a while so the blockade would quieten down and then give the signal." said Kari "So we'll be waiting a while."

"Oh well…at least I'll…be free in a few minutes…so it doesn't matter…now." said Miranda "I hope…this plan doesn't go awry."

"It won't Miranda." assured Kari "It won't…"

And it seemed that Kari was right as the plan had been going swimmingly so far so nothing could possibly go wrong now…

Outside, fifteen long minutes passed at last and all Kate and the chipmunks brothers had been doing was sitting there guarded by robo-officers. Nobody had a watch so they didn't know what the time was but Kate could tell the time by looking at the sun, a talent that most eagles had. Kate looked at the sun, which was shining brightly above the Sentinel Blockade, and she managed to work out fifteen minutes had passed. Kate then tried to wave her wing but she realized that her hands had been cuffed together so she couldn't. Instead, she lifted both arms up and waved her cuffed hands. The sphere cuffs twinkled in the sunlight and Shadow caught sight of the eagle waving her arms. Shadow grinned maliciously to himself.

"That's the signal." he said darkly "Now's the time I make the doctor pay for the lies he's told me before."

He activated his jet shoes and he skated down the rocky mountain at supersonic speed. He couldn't wait to trash the place and see the horrified look on Dr. Eggman's face when he showed himself to him once again. It would make helping the Northern Royal Fighters rescue Miranda completely worth it even though he was only in it to stomp on Dr. Eggman…

Footnotes:

***I bet you remember the Shadow saga (*STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 57-63) don't you?**

** As seen in *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 63

The Sentinel Blockade has been breached and Shadow is about to unleash his true powers on the Sentinel Blockade! Is Miranda as good as saved or is their some sinister twist waiting to unfold? Join me next time as this arc comes to a close...Read and Review.

Meanwhile, join me in* Heroes of Mobius *as Knuckles and Imperator Ix fight for Angel Island!

The Sentinel Blockade 3

Arc 8: The Sentinel Blockade

Takes place after Story 72 and between Stories 73-75

Part 3

Kate the Eagle waved her cuffed hands over to Shadow the Hedgehog, who stood on a ledge looking down at the Sentinel Blockade and waiting to make his move. He had joined the Northern Royal Fighters on a rescue mission to save their team leader, Miranda Mongoose, although he was only in it to get revenge on Dr. Eggman and now Kate was giving him the go-go. Shadow ran down the ledge and he skated towards the Sentinel Blockade at top speed with his jet shoes. One of the hundred robo-officers on the yard saw Kate waving and it grabbed her by the arms.

"Hey, who are you waving at?" it demanded angrily.

Kate just promptly pecked it on the arm. Kate's pecks were as strong as her fists and that one peck left a huge dent in the robo-officer's arm. The robo-officer recoiled quickly and it rubbed its arm. Thunder and Bolt, two chipmunk brothers, just laughed at the robo-officer.

"Not to you Robocop, don't touch Kate the Eagle if you know what's good for you." said Thunder helpfully.

"If she can't use her arms, her beak's a good substitute!" sniggered Bolt.

One of the robo-officers pointed a rifle at Thunder and Bolt to make them shut up. Thunder and Bolt did as they were told and they closed their mouths tightly.

"Make another noise and we'll blast you!" warned the robo-officer.

But then suddenly, Shadow leaped over the wall and he landed onto

the robo-officer's back. The robo-officer yelped as it was suddenly taken off its feet and sent crashing down on its front. Shadow stomped on the robot's back, leaving a huge dent in it, and then he threw a Chaos Spear at the one Kate just dented. The Chaos Spear struck the robot in the chest and the robo was brought down onto its back. Shadow then threw a Chaos Spear at Kate, Thunder and Bolt's sphere cuffs, breaking them all into little pieces and freeing their hands so now they could use their arms again.

"Thanks Shadow." said Thunder.

"Don't mention it, go and save your leader while I keep these clunk heads busy." ordered Shadow "I've got this."

"It seems so." said Bolt "Come on, let's save Miranda and Kari from that woman-bot-thingy!"

With that said Kate, Thunder and Bolt quickly ran for it as fast as they possibly could before the robo-officers could even catch them or stop them. Five robo-officers saw the three fighters running towards the cell blockade and they tried to shoot them with their huge rifles but Shadow the Hedgehog threw a Chaos Spear at them each. The robo-officers were impaled in the back by the Chaos Spears and they were brought down in an instant. One robo-officer drew out a huge metal baton and it tried to whack Shadow with it but Shadow warped out of its way and reappeared behind it. He kicked the robot in the back and knocked it over. Then he proceeded to snatch the baton from the robo-officer and smash the robot's head in with the baton. The robot's head was crushed and the robot was offline. A couple of robo-officers tried to shoot Shadow with their rifles but Shadow spin-dashed them both into little pieces. The robo-officers lay in pieces on the ground and Shadow smirked at their remains.

"Now I can see why Sonic has such an easy time with the doctor's robots." he crowed "They're pathetic. This mission will be over before the doctor knows it."

You'd think by now Shadow would have known better then to stop and boast for a minute during battle because that got him into a lot of trouble during his time with Dr. Eggman when he was his ally

instead of his enemy*. While Shadow boasted, a dozen robo-officers appeared from behind and they all blasted him at once. Shadow cried out as his back was blasted by twelve searing hot lasers and the black hedgehog was thrown down to the ground onto his stomach. Shadow grunted in pain. Despite his immortality, he was capable of feeling pain and that attack on him had really hurt him. Two robo-officers nervously approached the downed Shadow to see if he was unconscious or still awake. They kept their rifles ready for in case they needed to shoot Shadow quickly. They two robots peered at Shadow and they waited for the black hedgehog to do something. Shadow remained lying on the ground, completely motionless. One of the robo-offices poked him ever so slightly with the barrel of its rifle. Shadow still didn't move. It appeared that Shadow had indeed been knocked out by the twelve laser blasts from the twelve robo-officers that had ambushed him. Seeing that Shadow had been knocked out, one of the robo-officers reached out to grab him and lock him up along with Miranda and Kari. But before the robo-officer could even grab Shadow, Shadow teleported out of its way just as its arm reach to grab him. Shadow had not been knocked out; he had instead been playing dead to fool the officers and it had worked to perfection. The robo-officer that had tried to grab Shadow was dumbfounded and it wondered what on Mobius had just happened. Shadow reappeared behind the robo-officer and he threw a Chaos Spear at the robo-officer. The Chaos Spear impaled it through the back and killed it instantly. The robo-officer fell onto its front and lay on the ground dead as a doornail. Shadow had managed to destroy many robo-officers but he still had a lot left to go. He had destroyed ten of them so he only had ninety left to deal with. Shadow was not concerned by the large number of robo-officers on patrol at all; he knew he could destroy all of them in a matter of seconds. He just had to keep it in mind that he shouldn't start gloating until he had defeated them all. Shadow spin-dashed two robots to pieces and sent them tumbling down to the ground in bits and pieces. Shadow landed foot-first on a robo-officer's face and knocked it down onto its back. He stomped on the robot's head and destroyed it, killing the robot in an instant. A robo-officer wielding a taser the size of a sword ran up to Shadow and it attempted to shock Shadow to death with the taser but Shadow jumped out of the way just as it lunged at him and Shadow kicked it in the back of the head just as he leaped over it, knocking the robo-

officer onto its front. It dropped its sword sized taser and Shadow snatched it. It stabbed the robot with the taser, which was still activated, and the robo-officer got a very painful shock that fried its circuits and caused a lot of them to blow up inside of it. The robo-officer was destroyed instantly. Shadow smirked at the dead robo-officer and he sped off to attack another robo-officer that was attempting to shoot him.

"This is no challenge." he murmured to himself "But it's worthwhile at least. I hope Kari's group is doing well without me or I will have to help them."

He threw two Chaos Spears at the robo-officer and he destroyed it instantly. All the other robo-officers readied their weapons and they attempted to kill Shadow with their terrible gadgets. Shadow just fought back as hard as he could and prepared to make a scrap pile out of the remaining robo-officers…

Meanwhile in the cell blockade, Miranda Mongoose, the Northern Royal Fighters' team leader, and Kari the Rat, the Northern Royal Fighters' mechanic, were still dangling by their arms off the floor and they were waiting tensely for something to happen. Seventeen minutes had passed and nothing had happened. The Sentinel Blockade's warden-bot Katherine hadn't even returned yet and that just made Kari feel nervous. Was Katherine preparing her interrogation and was taking her time? Or was she just letting time pass just to make her feel nervous for the fun of it? Regardless, Kari didn't feel very comfortable right now and she began to wonder what Katherine had in mind for her. As for Miranda, she had just been keeping quiet and grimacing from her injuries. Katherine had tortured her pretty badly and Miranda could still feel the hard steel punches from the times Katherine had let loose on her. As time passed, Miranda wondered if Kari's plan was even working or being put into motion. Miranda decided to ask her mechanical friend and see what Kari's game was right now.

"Kari…?" she wheezed "What is taking…our friends and that… Shadow person so long?"

"I told them to buy their time for a little while to catch them off guard." explained Kari "I have no idea if they're still buying their time or if they're springing into action right now. I wish I had some way of communicating with them so I could find out. Not that it would be of any use given my current position," she murmured, looking up at her suspended arms "Let's just hope that Kate and the boys are springing into action right now."

"I am…hoping…" grunted Miranda "I...can't take this wait… anymore…"

"Me neither." said Kari with a worried expression on her face "I keep worrying about that Katherine bot thing bursting in any minute now and preparing to torture me. The fact she's buying her time is making me feel extremely uneasy right now."

"I'm willing to bet…that's exactly what Katherine…is doing…" said Miranda weakly "I really…hope that we'll be saved before… Katherine can torture…you…you're too sweet and caring to…have to go through such…pain and it'll be…horrible to watch."

"I really can't stop wondering how Katherine even managed to overhear us mentioning the vaults in the first place." muttered Kari "Did she just happen to come across us as we were talking?"

"That's…the likeliest probability." said Miranda groggily "How…it managed to creep…up on us…and spy on us without…us spotting it…I have no idea…"

"I guess Katherine's an excellent spy." said Kari "I think destroying her would be best for all of us as she's a rather dangerous threat to the R.F.S."

"Once I'm…rested up and back…in action we'll make it…our first priority to…destroy that demon warden-bot…" muttered Miranda "I will make that…robot suffer for what…it did to me…"

"I really hate it when robots are used for evil purposes." said Kari glumly "It's horrible seeing how such incredible technology can be used for such evil deeds. I'll never build something capable of such evil. Ever."

"And that's why…you're a much…better mechanic then…Dr. Eggman…" said Miranda with a weak smile on her battered face "You use your…mechanical skills properly and…you do not abuse your abilities unlike…that Eggman monster…who would much rather…build stuff for bad rather then good…"

"Thank you Miranda." said Kari, flattered by the comment "I'm so glad to be on your team."

"And I'm glad…I took you in…when no one…else would…" said Miranda kindly.

Then suddenly, just before they could carry on this long train of exposition, the cell door opened up and in ran Kate, Thunder and Bolt! Kari's face brightened. Miranda's face beamed like a sunrise. Their friends had finally arrived at last! Thunder and Bolt summoned a lightening bolt each to their hands and they threw them at Miranda and Kari's sphere cuffs. The bolts destroyed the sphere cuffs and Miranda and Kari dropped back down to the floor. Miranda slumped down onto the floor due to her injuries whereas Kari had no trouble staying up on her feet.

"About time." said Kari brightly "How long did you lot decide to wait for?"

"About fifteen minutes…I think." said Thunder "Kate knows, she can tell time by the sun's position after all."

"We felt fifteen minutes would be plenty long enough." said Bolt.

"Where's Shadow?" asked Kari.

"Turning the yard into a scrap yard." said Thunder with a big cheesy grin on his cheery face "Those robo-cop drones are being turned into piles of metal out there!"

"The Shadow definitely is a powerhouse isn't he?" asked Bolt "I bet he could beat Sonic in a fight."

Kari laughed weakly at their little joke, wondering if Sonic and Shadow had actually had a fight at all and who came out on top. As for Kate, she wondered over to Miranda and she looked at her old

school friend. The eagle was disgusted at Miranda's injuries. She couldn't believe what the robots of the Sentinel Blockade had done to her.

"What happened to you?" screeched Kate angrily, itching to pummel something after what had happened to Miranda.

"I was…tortured by a robot…named Katherine…" coughed Miranda, rubbing her throbbing arms better "Dr. Eggman…wants to know… about the…Royal Fighter….Vaults…I refused to talk…so Katherine…tortured me really badly…"

Kate's arms trembled in anger. She tried her hardest to not accidentally unleash her anger on Miranda while she was tensing up angrily. Thunder and Bolt were pretty horrified at what Miranda had just told Kate.

"Oh my jumping, thunder bolts!" squealed Bolt "That Katherine bot pummelled you hard didn't she? I'm just thankful you're still alive!"

"And I'm thankful…that you…all came to save me…" croaked Miranda "Thank…you so…much you wonderful…team mates…"

"You're welcome Miranda." said Kari sweetly "Now let's make a break for it before Katherine catches us."

Little did Kari know, Katherine had just come back to torture her and she found that Kari and Miranda had just been freed from their bonds by Kate and the chipmunk brothers. The warden-bot was not pleased to see that her prisoners were free but she still had the advantage of surprise over them as she knew the blockade top to bottom and they knew nothing about the place so she was still three steps ahead of them. Katherine slammed a button on the side of the door and the cell-door closed down before the Northern Royal Fighters could get through it. The fighters were trapped in the cell and they had no way of escaping the cell as there were no trap-doors or any other ways of getting out other then the door. Katherine played a recording of a sexy evil woman's chuckle to herself and she pressed another button on the control pad. Then, Katherine walked away from the door and was just about to make a call to Dr. Eggman when she was interrupted by a call from a robo-officer. She

touched the side of her head and heeded the call.

"Katherine, there's trouble on the yard!" cried the robo-officer "A black hedgehog is attacking us and we need some help and fast!"

His voice went dead as Shadow destroyed it just after it finished its message. Katherine fumed to herself. Could anything else go awry today? Well Katherine would deal with Shadow the Hedgehog and then comeback and collect the corpses of the Northern Royal Fighters once the thing she'd set off in the cell killed them. Katherine turned to the right and headed off to the yard to help her robo-officer cronies defeat Shadow. Meanwhile in the cell, Kari had seen the cell door close and she ran to it quickly. The door had closed shut and they were now trapped in the cell with no way out. Kari banged feebly on the door.

"Hey! Let us out of here!" she cried, banging on the door as loud as she could "Let us out of here!"

"What happened?" asked Thunder "Why did the door just close?"

"I bet Katherine saw what we were doing so she's locking us in here to prevent us from escaping!" shrieked Bolt "We're trapped! Oh calamity! The plan's in turmoil! We're all dead now!"

"No we're not." said Kari "We are not rotting in this cell. We are getting out of here. Kate, bust the door down." she ordered.

Kate obeyed and she cracked her knuckles. Kate strode over to the door and she drew her arm back. She then swiftly punched the door as hard as she could. To Kate's horror, the door took the blow from her powerful fist! There wasn't even a dent on it after that punch! The door was strong enough to withstand her punches! The eagle's feathers stood up in surprise. Miranda's weary eyes widened in surprise at the fact Kate's punch hadn't worked.

"I don't…believe it!" she gasped "The door withstood her attack!"

"Kate can't bust the door down!" cried Thunder "What are we gonna do now?"

"We have to bust that door down or we'll never get out of here." said

Kari worriedly "Kate, keep punching that door and don't stop until you bust it down."

Kate obeyed and she punched the door once again. She punched and punched on the door, using both fists one at a time, and she punched at her very hardest. Kate had to keep this up or they would be stuck in this dark cell forever. Then more trouble began. Two little nozzles extended out from above the cell door and a faint hissing noise came out from the nozzles. Everybody froze at the sinister sound. Nobody could see anything coming out of the nozzles but there was definitely something because there was a hissing noise. Miranda sniffed the air and caught a deadly scent. The smell was the smell of death and she instantly knew from that smell what was emitting out of the nozzles.

"Gas!" she shrieked "Likely to…be poisonous gas! Cover your mouths…and don't breathe it in!"

Kari, Kate, Thunder and Bolt all quickly covered their mouths and they stepped back from the gas that was pouring out of the nozzles above the door. Katherine had activated the gas nozzles after locking the door in order to put the Northern Royal Fighters to sleep so she could deal with them later. The gas wasn't poison, it was only sleeping gas but Miranda was not taking any chances. Gas in enemy territory was never any good so she and her team mates fought to keep the horrible gas out of their mouths. Yet they knew they wouldn't be able to keep this up forever. They would eventually succumb and have to breathe and they would end up breathing in the gas. They had to get out of the cell now but Kate couldn't break down the door while trying to keep the gas out of her lungs so breaking out was no option at this minute. However, Thunder and Bolt both had a great idea.

"Hey Bolt, you thinking what I'm thinking?" asked Thunder, his hands muffling his voice as he kept the gas out of his mouth.

"I think I am Thunder." said Bolt through his hands "Let's destroy the nozzles!"

They kept one hand over their mouths and they summoned another lightening bolt to their free hands. They threw the bolts at the gas

nozzles and the bolts destroyed the gas nozzles instantly. Gas stopped pouring out and the nozzles fell down to the ground in pieces. Thunder and Bolt high-fived each other and they cried happily. That was one problem dealt with already. Miranda uncovered her mouth and she beamed at the two boys.

"Boys, as annoying…as you…can be…I'm glad you're…on my team…" said Miranda kindly "We'd…be dead if it wasn't…for you two…"

"Aw it was nothing Miranda." said Bolt "That's what we do after all, we joke around and still do our duty at the same time."

"It's just a slaggin' pity we're still stuck in this crummy cell!" groaned Thunder "Now the gas is off, Kate can bust us out of here!"

Kate strode back over to the door and she began to punch it as hard as she possibly could once again. She rapidly punched door over and over and over in a desperate attempt to break the door down. They had to escape and fast before something else happened and made their escape even harder….

Back on the yard, Shadow was still in flat-out-destroy-all-robots-mode. Only fifty robots were left and Shadow was beginning to get a little worn out but he knew he'd be able to keep it up until he destroyed the rest. However, Shadow knew that he would have to pick up the pace before the robots could overpower him with their large numbers. Three robo-officers, each wielding a baton, threw their weapons at Shadow. The batons spun towards Shadow at a terrific speed as if they were boomerangs and they almost hit the invincible hedgehog. But Shadow spin-dashed the batons to pieces and he threw a Chaos Spear at each of the three robots. The three robots were stricken by the spears and they collapsed onto the ground, no longer functioning. Shadow landed on the ground and the remaining forty-seven robot-officers surrounded Shadow. They formed a circle around him to prevent him from getting away and they primed their enormous rifles. Shadow showed no signs of fear; he just smirked and dared the robots to get him.

"Go on then, shoot me." he dared "You've completely got me now."

The robo-officers were baffled at that sudden urge but they decided to take it. They aimed their rifles and they prepared to shoot Shadow. Shadow just remained calm and he unclipped one of his inhibitor rings. The ring fell off his wrist and fell to the ground with a clatter. Then Shadow removed his other ring just as the robo-officers prepared to blast him to smithereens. The ring fell to the floor with a clatter. The robo-officers charged up their rifles and they prepared to pull the trigger. Shadow tensed up tightly and he began to glow bright red. He was using one of his signature moves. The deadly Chaos Blast, a move that had helped him several times during the time he was Sonic's enemy. The robo-officers shot at him but the Chaos Energy surrounding Shadow defended him from the blasts. Shadow stopped tensing up and he unleashed the Chaos Power from within.

"Chaos… **BLAST!** " he yelled.

A huge wave of red Chaos Energy swept out from his tiny black body and destroyed all forty-seven robo-officers instantly. The robo-officers were blown away by the blast and they were quickly reduced to tiny little pieces by the raw power of Shadow's attack. The yard was now completely littered with robot parts and fragments and shrapnel. Any robo-officers already dead were reduced to even tinier pieces by Shadow's Chaos Blast. Shadow smirked at his triumph and he picked up his inhibitor rings. He clipped them back onto his wrists and he surveyed the mess he had made of the entire robo-officer patrol. Their remains completely littered the yard. It would take a while for anyone in the blockade to clean up. Shadow chuckled darkly to himself.

"Too easy." he sneered "If the doctor wishes to stand a chance against someone like me, he's going to have to try harder then this. I wonder if the doctor himself is actually here. Well there's only one way to find out, I'll have to investigate this place."

So Shadow headed off to the blockade itself. He had a feeling that if Dr. Eggman was anywhere in the blockade, it would be inside the building and if Shadow had to tear the building to the ground to find Dr. Eggman then he would happily do so. But before Shadow could

go into the blockade, Katherine suddenly appeared out of through the door and she marched out onto the yard. Shadow hesitated a moment and he stood still. Katherine surveyed her surroundings and she was not too pleased to see that her entire robo-officer patrol had been reduced to spare parts and debris and shrapnel. She then stared at Shadow and surveyed him. Shadow stared back at Katherine. The robot looked strange to him. He'd never seen an Eggman robot like Katherine before during his time as Eggman's ally but he didn't care. An Eggman robot was an Eggman robot no matter what it looked like and he was going to destroy it. Before Shadow could so much as twitch an ear, Katherine's still-cracked visor displayed an image of Dr. Eggman's face again. Dr. Eggman's eyes widened at the mere sight of Shadow the Hedgehog and his moustache seemed to straighten in alarm.

"Oh my gosh!" he cried "Shadow! I wasn't expecting to see you some time soon! What are you doing here?"

"Helping some Royal Fighters rescue their leader." said Shadow grimly ""Although I'm mainly here just to get my revenge on you for your lies. Show yourself to me doctor so I can soften my knuckles on your face!"

"Oh ho, ho, ho! Still holding a grudge are we?" sneered Dr. Eggman "It's not good for your health you know!"

"Stupid remarks won't save you doctor." snarled Shadow "Are you gonna face me or not?"

"I can't face you Shadow because I'm in Robotropolis, not here right now and I'm too busy to fight you but I will book a wager with you." said Dr. Eggman "If you can beat Katherine in a fight, I'll face you and face you like a man. If not, you become a prisoner of the Sentinel Blockade. How does that sound?"

"You have a deal doctor." said Shadow grimly "Don't expect to win though, I'm too powerful."

"I know." said Dr. Eggman "Which is why after I left Chun-Nan, I upgraded Katherine with the right gadgets to keep up with your raw power. Well I must be going now. Byeeeeee…."

And with that, Dr. Eggman's voice and image faded away and Katherine's visor died down to its natural pitch black colour. Katherine remained standing guard in front of the door. Shadow strode up to Katherine, his red eyes glaring at her. Katherine stood still and didn't move.

"If I were you, I would stand down." said Shadow "You can see what I've done to your cronies and I'll do the same to you Katherine. Save yourself an unnecessary destruction and stand down now."

Katherine still didn't move. She stood guard, silent and as still as a gargoyle. Shadow frowned at Katherine. How dare that stupid little robot refuse to move? Well, Shadow would make her feel sorry she said no to him!

"Fine." said Shadow in a dangerous sounding voice "Don't say I didn't give you a chance to make it out alive."

So Shadow spin-dashed towards Katherine, the fem-bot still standing still and not moving. But before Shadow could hit Katherine, Katherine deployed a barrier from her built-in force-field generator and Shadow ricocheted off the barrier. Shadow skidded to a halt and he stopped just in front of a wall. Shadow stared in horror at Katherine's barrier. Katherine was shielded by a red energy sphere with no way of being penetrated. Shadow snarled angrily.

"A barrier? That's just cheating!" he growled "My attacks will be useless! How can this be a fair fight if I can't even touch you?"

"That's the precisely the point!" a recording of Dr. Eggman's voice rung out from Katherine's voice recorder which was built into her throat "I don't play fair!"

Shadow got cross and he spin-dashed towards Katherine again. But Katherine kept up the barrier so Shadow ricocheted off the barrier again and he hurtled backwards a few feet. Katherine raised her arms up and she held her hands up in a "Stop right there!" position. She then began to fire several bladed discs at Shadow. The barrier she had was designed to block anything except Katherine's weapons so she could use her weapons even with the barrier up. Shadow dodged the discs with ease and he spin-dashed towards

Katherine again. Even though he knew his attacks were futile, he was determined to penetrate the force-field. Shadow ricocheted off the barrier again but Shadow charged towards Katherine again. Katherine then expanded the barrier out around her and the barrier hit Shadow just as he was charging towards her. Shadow was smacked by the barrier and he hurtled backwards into the wall at the end of the yard. Shadow crashed into the wall and he ended up slightly embedded into the wall. Shadow pulled himself out of the wall and he charged towards Katherine again. Katherine clasped both her hands together and in the palms of her hands, something began to build up. Shadow almost reached Katherine just as she finished building something up in her attack and Shadow lunged towards her. Katherine then thrust her hands outwards and a huge laser blast shot out from the palms of her hands and blasted Shadow down into the ground. Shadow smashed into the ground head-first and he groaned to himself.

"Stupid accursed force-field!" he grumbled "How can I destroy that thing if I can't touch it? I'll find a way of destroying that thing somehow!"

Katherine raised her arms and began firing bladed discs at Shadow again. Shadow picked himself up and he swiped his arm at Katherine and three Chaos Spears shot towards Katherine. They destroyed some of her bladed discs but they bounced harmlessly off the barrier. Katherine then shortened the barrier a little so it only looked like a red outline around her body and she strode up to Shadow. Shadow threw a Chaos Spear at Katherine, hoping that it would hurt her since the barrier had been shortened but the barrier was just as effective even if it was shortened so the spear just bounced off of her harmlessly. Katherine had shortened the barrier so she would be able to punch Shadow. Katherine drew her arm back and she socked Shadow directly in the face. Since Shadow was the Ultimate Life Form, that punch had less of an effect as it would do on an ordinary being but it was still a terrific punch from Katherine and Shadow could feel it. He felt like he'd been hit by an iron bar. The barrier had made the punch even harder so the punch was more powerful then normal. Shadow fell onto his side and he clutched his throbbing jaw.

"What power does that thing have behind it?" he gasped "That thing can punch harder then that cyborg rabbit girl Sonic's friends with!"

Katherine advanced on Shadow and prepared to attack him again. Seeing as the barrier was shortened so it covered Katherine's body rather then surrounded her, Shadow spin-dashed Katherine. The barrier stopped the spin-dash from destroying her but Katherine was still sent hurtling backwards. Katherine quickly expanded the barrier back to its normal sphere shape and she bounced off the wall like a ping-pong ball. She hurtled directly towards Shadow as if she was a dodge ball being thrown at somebody but Shadow leaped up and kicked the barrier before Katherine could bowl him over. Katherine was sent hurling backwards but she aimed her feet at the wall before she could crash into it and she shortened the barrier before she could bounce off of it again. Katherine hit the wall foot first and she hurtled herself towards Shadow. She switched off the barrier and spun around in mid-air like a drill-bit. She struck Shadow and ground him into the dirt. Katherine landed right-side up and she re-activated the barrier. Shadow picked himself up and he prepared to attack again. Katherine fired some bladed discs at Shadow but Shadow dodged the attacks and he leaped towards Katherine. He punched the barrier but the barrier repelled him and he skidded backwards. Shadow growled angrily to himself.

"That robot is much more of a challenge then those pathetic cop-bots I destroyed." he muttered "Regardless, I'll destroy it eventually; I just need to find a weakness on that thing."

And he would have to do it fast before Katherine overwhelmed him with her cunning tactics and then locked him up as a prisoner for Dr. Eggman…

Meanwhile in the cell blockade, Kate the Eagle had been punching the door for several minutes and yet the eagle hadn't managed to destroy it yet. No matter how many times Kate punched the door; the door just withstood her amazingly strong punches. The door wasn't dented the slightest despite the heavy pounding it had been receiving from her minutes on end. Kate punched the door one last time and then collapsed onto the floor, panting and gasping like an

athlete that's done ten long laps in the long run. The eagle was absolutely worn-out and her fists felt numb after punching such a hard door for so long and yet not damaging it the slightest. Miranda couldn't believe it, no matter how many time Kate had punched the door, it withstood her powerful attacks and they were still trapped in the cell.

"I can't believe…it!" gasped Miranda "Kate…can't break the door down!"

"Looks like Dr. Eggman put all he could into that door." said Kari grimly "I bet that thing would withstand a bomb blast. Poor Kate, she's all worn out and she hasn't managed to break the door down."

Kate just slumped on the floor with a heavy wheeze and she continued to pant tiredly. She felt like she was going to pass out from exhaustion. Thunder and Bolt patted Kate on the back affectionately.

"Ah Kate, you tired your hardest." said Thunder softly "Don't feel too bad."

"At least you had a go." said Bolt "None of us can be bothered to try and break the door down."

Kate didn't answer them; she just continued to pant exhaustedly. Kari put a finger to her lips and she thought desperately.

"We've got to get out of here or we'll all be prisoners for Dr. Eggman." said Kari "But how can we break the door down if Kate's amazing strength can't get through that door?"

"If only…my electro-prod was fixed…." muttered Miranda "I could just short circuit the controls and get the door to open…"

"Wait a minute…" said Kari quickly "There's a control pad right there." she suddenly said, pointing at a control pad that was there so that anyone wanting to leave the cell could use it to open the door "Gosh I feel like such a twit! Why didn't we just use that pad to open the door?"

"Because we're dumbos that's why." said Bolt, strolling over to the

door and pressing a button on the control pad.

But the moment he pressed the button, he got a very nasty zap on his finger and he leaped back.

"Yow!" he cried "That's why we didn't use that pad to open the door! We can't use it!"

"Very clever." muttered Miranda "The control…pad will only work… for Katherine or any of the robots here…"

"So if we can't use the pad to open the door then we'll have to open it another way." said Kari "And thinking about your idea to short-circuit it with your electro-prod earlier…maybe Thunder and Bolt could do it instead."

"You know what Kari, I think you're absolutely right." said Thunder with a big cheesy grin on his face "Me and Bolt will short-circuit that control pad and hopefully, it'll open the door."

"If not then we're just screwed really badly right now." said Bolt as he and Thunder held hands.

They then tensed up their tiny little bodies and electricity crackled in their fur. They then fired a gigantic bolt of electricity at the control pad at the side of the door. The control pad was fried in an instant by the terrific bolt of electricity and the control pad blew several fuses. The damage done to it was so severe it broke away from the wall and fell to the floor in pieces. The moment the pad was destroyed, the door opened up, freeing everybody at long last. Thunder and Bolt skipped about happily.

"Yay! We've opened the door!" cheered the chipmunks "We've freed everybody!"

"Well done…boys." said Miranda "You've managed to open…the door at last…"

"Let's run for it before anything else can happen." said Kari "Kate, you carry Miranda as she's too banged up to walk."

Kate obeyed and she scooped Miranda up bridal style. Miranda

moaned weakly. She wished she was able to walk as she hated having to be carried around, it made her feel weak. Kari, Kate, Thunder and Bolt ran out of the cell quickly before anything else could happen. Kari led the way with Thunder and Bolt behind her and Kate took the rear, carrying the battered Miranda in her arms. The Northern Royal Fighters ran down the corridor and to the door that led outside to the yard. They hoped that there was nothing else that was going to happen and catch them off guard. They had had a hard enough time as it was and if anything else happened, they wouldn't be prepared for it…

Meanwhile out on the yard, Shadow the Hedgehog was still having trouble with Katherine. No matter how many times he spin-dashed, charged and threw Chaos Spears at Katherine, he still couldn't penetrate Katherine's barrier. The robot's barrier was just impossible to penetrate. Katherine spent her whole time just standing there and letting Shadow spin-dash at her over and over while occasionally shooting at him just to get on his nerves. The warden-bot was attempting to tire Shadow out by just letting him constantly attack her over and over, which would eventually tire Shadow out and leave him vulnerable for her and she was only shooting at Shadow in an attempt to tire him out even quicker. The black hedgehog had tremendous stamina but not even he would be able to keep the fight going forever. He could get worn out just like any normal person. Shadow however, wasn't stupid. He had a feeling that Katherine was trying to tire him out by just doing nothing and letting him attack so he stopped spin-dashing at Katherine. He began to think quickly to himself. He couldn't penetrate the shield no matter what and all his attempts were in vain and he'd wear himself thin if he carried this on any longer. How could he destroy Katherine if he couldn't penetrate her barrier? He could try Chaos-Blasting her but he didn't want to risk trying that in case it didn't work and he just left himself power drained and vulnerable to Katherine's wrath. Maybe he could trick Katherine into switching the barrier off. Shadow smiled darkly to himself. Yes…he had the perfect plan. He would feign tiredness to trick Katherine and when she lowered her barrier, he would let loose on her. Shadow spin-dashed towards Katherine again and he ricocheted off the barrier. He hurtled backwards and he skidded

across the dirt once again. But instead of attacking again, he pretended to pant. Katherine stood still and watched as Shadow panted and gasped tiredly. Then Shadow collapsed onto the ground, pretending to be too tired to attack. Katherine was a little weary at first, wondering what Shadow's game was, but she dismissed it as just being too overly cautious as Shadow was clearly too tired to fight her now and he didn't appear to be faking so she switched off the barrier and walked up towards Shadow. The fem-bot felt pleased with herself. She had beaten Shadow fair and square and now she was going to lock him up with the Northern Royal Fighters and keep him prisoner for Dr. Eggman. She couldn't wait to see her master's expression when he saw Shadow in her clutches. Katherine stood over Shadow, who lay on the ground still pretending to pant, and she reached out to grab him with her long thin claws. Then suddenly, Shadow leaped onto his feet and he socked Katherine directly in the face. The robot made a frantic robotical screech of surprise at that unexpected attack and Shadow then began to wail over and over on Katherine. The fem-bot was punched all over her body and Shadow didn't once slow down or give her a chance to fight back and raise the shield. Shadow then punched Katherine so hard the fem-bot fell onto her back with a sharp clang and he leaped back so he had the right distance for a spin-dash. Katherine picked herself up quickly but Shadow spin-dashed her before she could re-activate the barrier. Katherine was sent hurling backwards and she crashed straight into one of the cell blockade's walls. The robot was dented thanks to Shadow's fists and she felt a little frail after that spin-dash but the warden-bot was still not down or destroyed. Shadow spin-dashed again towards Katherine but his good luck ran out. Katherine re-activated the barrier after pulling herself out of the wall and Shadow ricocheted off of it and landed a good distance away from Katherine. Shadow growled angrily to himself as Katherine stood there as still as a statue.

"Damn it!" he growled "The plan almost worked! I should have just kept wailing on her until she went offline or something and then Chaos Blast her before she re-activated! Now I've got to get her to switch that damn force-field off again! I doubt she'll fall for the same trick twice though so I'll have to try something else."

But before Shadow could continue the fight, the Northern Royal

Fighters burst out from inside the blockade and they ran out onto the yard. Kate put Miranda down and she charged up to Katherine. She drew her arm back and she punched Katherine's barrier as hard as she could. Even though Katherine's barrier protected her from the incredibly powerful attack, the brute force of Kate's punch was strong enough to knock Katherine off her feet. Katherine hurtled backwards as if she was a dodge ball being thrown at somebody. The warden-bot hurtled towards Shadow and Shadow spin-dashed her before she could bowl him over like a skittle. Katherine hurtled back towards Kate and Kate just back-handed Katherine straight into a blockade wall. Katherine crashed straight through the wall, the barrier protecting her from the impact, and left a gaping hole in it. Katherine continued crashing through more walls in the blockade until eventually, she came to a stop and the barrier switched off. Katherine lay among some rubble that lay on the ground after the crashes, knocked out and motionless. She had crashed through five walls, two of which were cells, and had left huge gaping holes in them. The Sentinel Blockade was a complete mess now with dead robo-officers littering the yard, the yard's walls being broken in several places and the blockade itself having holes in five walls. Shadow folded his arms and huffed at what he and Kate had just accomplished now.

"Thank you Kate." said Shadow.

Kate just beamed with pride.

"So, did you manage to rescue your leader?" asked Shadow.

"We have, she's right here." said Kari, helping the weak and frail Miranda up onto her feet.

Miranda wrapped an arm around Kari's shoulder and Kari kept her up. Miranda looked at Shadow weakly and Shadow looked back at her.

"So I guess…you're Shadow…" Miranda said weakly.

"I am indeed." said Shadow "I joined your team in your rescue and it seems we've succeeded as you're free now. Pity you got used as a punching bag before we could get here."

"That doesn't matter now." said Kari "We've got Miranda and we've got to get out of here before anything else happens."

"Yes…but we must destroy…this place before we…go…" croaked Miranda "The loss of…this place will be a….heavy wound on Eggman's Empire and he…won't be able to imprison…anymore innocent Mobians."

"But we don't have anything to blow the place up with." noted Kari "We'll have to come back later and destroy it…"

"No we don't." said Shadow, removing his inhibitor rings once again "I can destroy the place easily."

"How?" asked Thunder "Do you have some ability that allows you to make things suddenly explode?"

"No. I have this." said Shadow lowly.

His body began to glow red with Chaos Energy again and he tensed up tightly. He stood in front of the Sentinel Blockade and he unleashed the power within him once again.

"Chaos… **BLAAASSSSTTTT!** " he bellowed as raw Chaos Energy exploded out from around him and swept forward.

The Chaos Blast ploughed its way through the Sentinel Blockade like a snowplough through the snow. Katherine rebooted just in time and saw that a huge wave of Chaos Energy was coming towards her so she quickly activated her barrier so the blast wouldn't destroy her. The blast swept over her and pushed her back a good distance but she survived the blast thanks to her barrier. The Sentinel Blockade was completely destroyed by Shadow's raw power and all that remained of the place after Shadow was finished were huge chunks of rubble, debris and concrete. The holding laser generators from the ceilings of the cells lay in pieces amongst the wreckage. Shadow picked up his inhibitor rings and he clipped them back onto his wrists. He felt a wave of power surge back up his veins as he clipped them back on. He surveyed the damages done to the Sentinel Blockade with satisfaction. He was well and truly pleased to see that he had just destroyed one of Dr. Eggman's most precious

facilities. How cross Eggman would be once he found out. Shadow smirked triumphantly.

"Let's see how you like that doctor." he said dryly.

Thunder and Bolt were well and truly gobsmacked at what Shadow had just done.

"Cor blimey!" cried Bolt "You don't half have some power in ya Shadow boy!"

"I know." said Shadow "That's why I am the Ultimate Life Form, nothing can stand to me and nothing is more powerful then I am."

"Well I guess we were extremely fortunate you decided to help us Shadow." said Kari with a bright smile on her face "Now let's run for it, I can't bear to stay in this place a minute longer."

With that said, Shadow sped off on his hover-skates with Kari, Thunder and Bolt running after him. Kate carried Miranda on her back and she flew into the air and swooped after Shadow. Miranda held on tight as Kate soared after the black hedgehog. She was free from Dr. Eggman grasp at last. She reminded herself to thank everybody once they made it back to camp. The moment everybody left though, a robot fist punched its way through the wreckage. It was, of course, Katherine. The fem-bot had been buried by the rubble but a bunch of rubble on top of her wasn't going to keep her down. Katherine pulled her way out of the rubble and she stood up straight. She surveyed the damages done to the blockade all around her. The Sentinel Blockade, a proud and powerful prison place was now in pieces thanks to Shadow's Chaos Blast. Katherine could see that she would do no more good around here so she decided to retreat back to Robotropolis, which was many miles away so it would be a long walk for her. Katherine left the wreckage of the Sentinel Blockade behind and she headed off to Dr. Eggman's city of operations. While she walked, she began to send a message to Dr. Eggman. She couldn't imagine Eggman being too pleased with her message once he read it…

Back in Robotropolis, Dr. Eggman got Katherine's message and he read it aloud to himself.

"Dr. Eggman, I am sorry to announce that the Sentinel Blockade has been destroyed by Shadow." he read "I almost beat him but I got overpowered by the Northern Royal Fighters and Shadow Chaos-Blasted the place to pieces. I am returning to Robotropolis right now. I hope you won't be too furious with me master. Love Katherine."

Dr. Eggman just sat back in his chair and he fumed loudly. He put a hand on his face and he ran it down his face slowly, sighing exasperatedly.

"Curse that miserable experiment!" he growled "My genius of a prison blockade is now in pieces! The Sentinel Blockade was one great way of me getting to roboticize many Mobians at once! Oh well, I can't let this bit of bad news darken my day. I've got many more plans to put into action."

He got up from his chair and he walked out of the lab.

"The repairs on my headquarters are done and the new adjustments and attachments I've been making secretly are almost finished." he said to himself "Soon I shall have a flying fortress and Angel Island shall be the first to see its true wrath! Once that's done, I shall move onto the whole world!"

He cackled loudly to himself as he left the lab. The Sentinel Blockade may have been a heavy loss, but whenever Dr. Eggman had a heavy loss, he retaliated with a heavy fist swiftly and powerfully and Angel Island would be the first to find that out…

Back at Miranda's camp, the Northern Royal Fighters had all arrived home and they settled back down into their camp. Kari got out the first aid kit and Miranda was wrapped in bandages in a few places. Her lower arms and her lower legs were wrapped in bandages and one of her eyes had a cold tissue placed on it to ease the pain of the bruise and a bandage was wrapped around her head to keep the tissue in place. Miranda sat in her deck-chair and let herself get

some much needed rest. Despite her injuries, the brave-hearted mongoose would make a steady recovery.

"There you are Miranda, all nice and bandaged." said Kari "How are you feeling now?"

"I feel much better now I've been saved." said Miranda, who was now able to speak properly again "Thank you everybody for risking your lives just to save mine. I couldn't ask for better team mates."

"And we couldn't ask for a better leader." said Kate with a smile on her beak.

Miranda just beamed with pride. It was nice to know she had such great friends by her side. There was one more thing to take care of now. Shadow the Hedgehog had decided to stick around and say his goodbyes and Miranda focused her attention on him now. Shadow stood there with his arms folded in front of Miranda.

"Thank you for helping my friends in their mission Shadow." said Miranda "I am eternally grateful to you young man. I'm amazed thought that you decided to help my friends even though you've never met them before. What made you want to help them anyway?"

"I only took this mission in hope I could get revenge on Dr. Eggman for deceiving me." said Shadow "But at the same time, I felt like I owed you Mobians an apology for my earlier actions. You see, I'm a genetic experiment from another world and I've forgotten my creator and purpose. Dr. Eggman fooled me into thinking he created me and I was supposed to destroy you all but Sonic managed to get Eggman to reveal the truth to me and now I go around Mobius looking for answers to my past while getting revenge on Dr. Eggman at the same time. And in order to redeem myself among you Mobians, I felt like helping one instead of trying to destroy one like the doctor tried to make me do."

"I see." said Miranda "Just a pity Eggman wasn't in the Sentinel Blockade so you could unleash hell on him."

"I'll get him some day." said Shadow determinedly "But for now, I

must continue my quest to find answers to my past. So long Miranda. So long everybody." he said with a wave to the Northern Royal Fighters "We may meet again someday but for now it's goodbye and who knows when we'll meet again."

"Bye Shadow." said the team in unison.

Shadow activated his jet shoes and he skated off away from Miranda's camp and off into the distance and beyond. Everybody waved goodbye as Shadow disappeared into the distance. The minute Shadow left, everybody got back to their business. Kari pulled up a deck-chair and sat beside Miranda.

"That Shadow is amazing isn't he?" she asked.

"He is." said Miranda "Unleashing all that power and destroying the Sentinel Blockade in an instant. I really hope that he'll find out his origins and what his purpose is. It must be horrible to feel like you've got no purpose in the world."

"I have hopes for him too Miranda." said Kari, looking up at the setting sun that slowly began to dip down behind the rocky hills in the distance "I have hopes for him too."

Footnotes:

***We all remember the Shadow saga (Heroes of Mobius Stories 57-62) don't we?**

Annnnnd that's the Sentinel Blockade arc done and dusted! Tune in next time as the R.F.S. gets some New Recruits to train. Read and Review

Meanwhile, tune back into Heroes of Mobius as Sonic and friends have their seventy-fifth adventure which also happens to me my THIRD milestone! :) :) :)

New Recruits 1

Arc 9: New Recruits

Takes place during Stories 76-78 in Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: Becoming a Royal Fighter

Queen Sally Acorn, Queen of Mobotropolis, was sitting at her desk and writing some paperwork related to the R.F.S. quietly to herself. She had had a pretty quiet time after the whole fiasco with the Region of Rebellious Reptiles*, a rarity for the chipmunk queen as Castle Acorn was a frequent target for evil doers such as Dr. Eggman or Scourge the Hedgehog from time to time. It was nice to finally have a quiet moment for once but she knew this wouldn't last so she had to make the most of this while she could. While Sally wrote the paperwork, she began to wonder to herself what Sonic the Hedgehog was up to at this very moment. After all, the hedgehog was never in the same place for long so who knew what he was doing at this moment. Sally was suddenly interrupted by a knock on the door. Sally looked up from her work and politely said.

"Come in."

The door opened and in walked two teenage Mobians that Sally had not seen before. These two were Scott Lynx and his girlfriend Jessica Cougar, both locals from the sunny country of Adabat. Sally was rather surprised at their presence here and she began to wonder what the two were here for.

"Hello there you two." said Sally "Welcome to Castle Acorn. My name is Sally Acorn, Queen of Mobotropolis but you can just call me Sally if you like."

"Hi your majesty." said Scott with a polite bow before the queen chipmunk "I am Scott and this is Jessica." he introduced.

"We are residents from Adabat and we've come here for a request."

said Jessica.

"And that request is..?" asked Sally with interest.

"We wish to join the Royal Fighters Service." said Jessica "We were told by somebody if we want to join we come to you to sign up."

"That is absolutely correct young lady, Castle Acorn is where you come to sign up for the R.F.S." said Sally with a warm smile on her face "I can't tell you how thrilled I am to see more Mobians join the R.F.S. and help fight for Mobius' freedom. Our forces are increasing and soon we'll be able to finally defeat Dr. Eggman and have our planet and our daily lives back."

"That's precisely why we wish to join the R.F.S." said Scott "We're fighters ourselves and we would like to put our skills to better use so we wanna become Royal Fighters."

"Before you sign up." said Sally "Please tell me a bit about yourselves. You both come from Adabat, you're a couple and you're both fighters yes?"

"Yes." said Jessica.

"What sort of fighters are you?" asked Sally.

"We're just the local hero type." explained Scott "We fight against an evil man named Ravage Bloodfang, a traitor who wishes to purge the country with fire after being exiled for breaking the law."

"Ravage Bloodfang?" mused Sally "The name rings a bell or two…I think I've heard of him, didn't he try to use some forbidden weapon of some kind even though it was against the law to use it?"

"That's right." said Jessica "He tried to use the forbidden Sceptre of Fates but he was caught and exiled for it. The sceptre gave me and Scott these powers after we touched it during the raid."

Scott and Jessica's hands both glowed a bright green colour and Scott made a shape in the air with the concentrated energy around his hands. Sally's eyes widened in interest. It wasn't often that people she met had the ability to use concentrated energy. Those

two were special Mobians indeed and she could see them becoming great use to the R.F.S.

"Impressive." said Sally "You can use concentrated energy, a power not seen among many Mobians."

"I know." said Scott "It's because of these powers we are able to fight and fight well. We fought Ravage for a month after he returned to Adabat but we haven't had much success. We almost caught him after we had some help from Geoffrey St. John and Bunnie Rabbot but he escaped by the skin of his teeth**. After meeting Geoffrey and Bunnie we were inspired to become Royal Fighters, especially since we've been fans of the service for a long time now."

"I see." said Sally "Well I see no trouble in signing you two up for the R.F.S. Funny enough, I had a visit from two Mobians from Adabat the other day and they joined the service."

"Who were they then?" asked Jessica.

"A lynx and a peacock." said Sally "They're being trained by Downunda Royal Fighters Mr. Staffer and Gerald at the moment. I'll see if they can train you two up as well."

"Sounds good to me." said Scott brightly "So now Adabat will have FOUR Royal Fighters once we join in! Heck, maybe we could be a team and become the Adabat Royal Fighters! Cool!" he exclaimed, his hands glowing green with excitement.

"It does seem that way." said Sally happily "Now, here's the sign up form," she added, pulling a slip of paper from a desk draw and showing it to Scott and Jessica "Just sign your names at the bottom there and I'll arrange a training session at Downunda for you."

She handed Scott a pen and the lynx wrote his name at the bottom of the sign-up form. He handed the pen to Jessica and Jessica wrote her name at the bottom of the form. Jessica gave the pen back to Sally and Sally put the pen and paper away. She got up from their desk and shook Scott and Jessica's hands with a kind smile on her face.

"Welcome to the Royal Fighters Service." she said.

"Thank you your majesty." the lynx and cougar said in unison, bowing down to Sally.

"The pleasure's all mine." said Sally "Now you'll have to wait patiently while I call the Downunda Royal Fighters and see if they can train you along with the other new recruits."

"What about the other groups such as Sonic's group?" asked Scott "Are they occupied or something?"

"They are." said Sally "So Downunda's your only option right now. Please wait here while I call them."

Sally left the room to make a call to Downunda. Scott and Jessica just stood where they were, not moving from their spot and waiting for Sally to return. They had no idea how long they'd be waiting for but they hoped it wouldn't be too long.

"Hey Jessie," said Scott "Who do you think the two people from Adabat that signed up already are?"

"Well Sally said they were a lynx and a peacock." said Jessica "I know a peacock from Adabat but it could be any peacock and not the one I'm thinking of so I'm not assuming the peacock will be the one I know."

"Right." said Scott "I wonder if the lynx is who I think it might be."

"Who do you think the lynx is then?" asked Jessica.

"My brother Taran." said Scott "Although if my brother was becoming a Royal Fighter, I'm sure he would have told me already so it can't be him."

"We'll find out for ourselves if we ever meet them." said Jessica "I wonder how well are they…"

Before she could finish what she was saying, Sally returned into the room with a joyful look on her face. It was clear that she had good news for them.

"Good news you two." said Sally happily "Mr. Staffer can spare some time to recruit you two. You're going to Downunda to become proper Royal Fighters."

The lynx and cougar both leaped up in excitement and they cheered happily.

"Yes!" cried Scott "We're gonna be Royal Fighters at last!"

The two couldn't wait to arrive at Downunda and begin their training.

Later that afternoon, Scott and Jessica arrived at an airport in Empire City to board a plane to Downunda as Downunda was very far away from Mobotropolis and it would be best to fly there. The two checked in and boarded their flight and the plane took to the skies, leaving Empire City behind and whisking the two new recruits to Downunda. The plane arrived at Downunda by the next morning (Downunda is VERY far away after all) and once the plane touched down and parked on the tarmac, Scott and Jessica checked out of the airport and they picked up a map on the way out. The map gave them directions to the Downunda Royal Fighter's camp. Once they arrived, they would introduce themselves to the fighters and then their training could begin. The first thing Scott and Jessica were wowed at is how hot Downunda was weather-wise. Just a little warmer then their home country of Adabat. They followed the map's directions and by 12 o' clock noon, they arrived at the camp at last. The camp was just as they'd expected. There were some training courses, a lot of army vehicles parked and waiting to be used, some semi-circle shaped steel buildings and a base of operations. There didn't appear to be much going on at the moment. It must be a quiet day for the Downunda Royal Fighters. They did see two individuals already out and about in the camp. These two were the joint leaders of the Downunda Royal Fighters. One was a brown weasel in a brown leather jacket with a belt with holsters and two pistols in them. His name was Mr. Staffer and he was the main man of the Downunda Royal Fighters. His assistant was a sandy brown ferret in a fedora named Gerald. The two appeared to be making notes at this moment. Mr. Staffer wandered around the camp with a clipboard in his hand. He began ticking things off as he surveyed the camp.

"Everything seems to be in tip-top shape." said Mr. Staffer "The camp's in good shape, the new recruits have settled in and our soldiers are training good and hard for our next battle with that Dr. Eggman fiend."

"Even though we don't get as much involvement as the other groups, we still have to be prepared Mr. Staffer." said Gerald, lifting the brim of his fedora up slightly "We could be needed at any moment."

"Too right mate." said Mr. Staffer, putting the clipboard away "I wonder if the two new fighters who signed up yesterday have arrived yet?"

"We have sir." said Jessica as she and Scott wondered up to the weasel and ferret.

Mr. Staffer and Gerald turned around and saw Scott and Jessica coming towards them. They hadn't expected the two to find their camp so quickly. It was only noon and they'd found them. Mr. Staffer stood to attention and Gerald raised his fedora politely. Scott and Jessica just saluted the two leaders.

"Hello mates." said Mr. Staffer "Welcome to the Downunda Royal Fighters Campsite. I guess you're the newest recruits to the R.F.S. you two?"

"We are sir." said Scott, lowering his arm "Scott Lynx: Adabat resident." He introduced.

"Jessica Cougar: Also an Adabat resident." introduced Jessica.

"Hmm…two more people from Adabat for us to train eh Gerald?" mused Mr. Staffer "Seems Adabat wants to get in the game after all."

"Pity they missed out on the first opportunity to join the R.F.S." said Gerald "The people of Adabat were just enjoying their sunshine a little too much to have anybody sign up and become a Royal Fighter. And now it seems they've had a change of heart."

"We've been fascinated by you Royal Fighters for a long time so we

decided to join the service." explained Scott "Who are the other two Adabat residents who have joined the R.F.S.?"

"Two young boys named Taran and Felix." said Gerald "They're in their quarters at the moment so I'll just send you there to meet them."

But Gerald didn't need to. Taran and Felix had just left their quarters after hearing the two leaders talking to Scott and Jessica and they came over to see them. Taran was a lynx and Scott's older brother. He was rather broad and muscular in comparison to Scott's skinny figure and he wore a brownish-red vest, a pair of shorts, bronze coloured bands with a green stud in the middle around his upper arms and big chunky shoes. His fur on his face was more ruffled then Scott's too. Felix was a green peacock with blue and purple tail-feathers. He had styled eyebrows above his head, red strips on the sides of his eyes and he wore a yellow vest. Felix spoke in a sophisticated manner much like Chun-Nan resident Bladefeather the Falcon and he had a special ability that allowed him to stiffen his tail-feathers, remove them from his bottom and use them as clubs in battle. Once he'd used them, he could put them back as if they had never been removed. Scott gaped at the sight of his brother. He couldn't believe his guess yesterday was right. His brother had signed up to the R.F.S.! Jessica had met Taran before so she recognized him. As for Felix, she had met him before too and he was the peacock she was thinking off yesterday. Seeing him in the R.F.S. was quite the surprise for the cougar. Mr. Staffer and Gerald wondered what Scott and Jessica were so surprised at and they turned around to see Taran and Felix coming towards them.

"Judging by your reactions, I guess you know those two blokes." Gerald deduced.

"We do." said Scott "The lynx is my brother Taran and the peacock is Jessica's friend Felix."

"Well in that case, you shouldn't have any problems settling in at all mates." said Mr. Staffer "I'll let you four have a meet and greet moment before we go over anything."

Mr. Staffer and Gerald stood to the side and let Taran and Felix go

up to Scott and Jessica. Taran's expression upon seeing his younger brother standing before him was epically gleeful.

"Good grief!" cried Taran happily, grasping Scott in a bear-hug and squeezing him so hard the poor lynx was about to burst "Scotty boy it's you! I guess my younger brother decided to join the R.F.S. did he?"

"I did Taran!" spluttered Scott, trying not to suffocate in his brother's grasp "Stop crushing me will you? I don't want to end my R.F.S. career before it begins!"

"Am I squeezing you too hard little Scotty?" laughed Taran "Sorry little bro, I thought you were tough enough to survive my bear-hugs by now!"

"I may have energy powers but it doesn't mean I'm invincible Taran and please stop calling me Scotty, its embarrassing." muttered Scott as Taran let go of him and he straightened his now ruffled fur.

"OK, have it your way Scott." sniggered Taran "It's good to see you again at least, haven't seen you since you and Jessica left our old village to get away from the bullies. That was what, six years ago now?"

"I know." said Scott "It is good to see you again big bro. I'm so sorry I had to leave you so early."

"Don't fret, if I were in your sandals that time, I would have left too." said Taran supportively "I can't stand bullying just as much as you can't."

"At least we're together again now we're Royal Fighters." said Scott affectionately "And this time, no bullies can drag us apart."

As for Jessica, she and Felix were meeting up with each other.

"Felix, oh my gosh I wasn't expecting to see you here!" cried Jessica, hugging her old friend.

"Jessica my dear, your very presence has brightened my day so much more." said Felix, returning the hug "Ever since your departure

from the old village six years ago, I began to wonder if our paths would ever cross again."

"I began wondering if we'd ever see each other again too." said Jessica, breaking up the hug "It's just a pity me and Scott got bullied so heavily because we have special powers so we had to leave to escape from it all. Leaving you behind was not something I would have willingly done Felix."

"I know that." said Felix "It's such a good fortune that we end up reuniting in the R.F.S., the one thing keeping that foul villain Dr. Eggman from conquering all of Mobius and making us his robotical servants. Now we're Royal Fighters, can fight this villain together and as part of a team and we shall smite his villain once and for all!" he declared, stiffening one of his tail-feathers and then taking it off his bottom so he could hold it up high and wave it like a flag.

"It's good to see you're still able to do that tail-feather trick." said Jessica admiringly "I wonder how you peacocks are able to do that."

"Even I have no intelligence on this pressing mystery of us peacocks." said Felix, putting the feather back on his bottom "I guess it'll be one of those facts in life I may never find the answer to."

"It doesn't matter if you don't find out." said Jessica "I'm just too happy to see you again old friend."

"As am I Jessica." said Felix "It's also pleasing to see your boyfriend Scott again. Nice to see how your relationship as managed to stay strong even after so many years."

"We may have our blips but we still remain true to each other." said Jessica "I find Scott's hot-headed nature strangely attractive for some reason."

"Many people have strange reasons for being a couple after all." said Felix.

Now the four had greeted each other, they gathered around each other and Scott asked Taran and Felix a question.

"What made you two wanna become Royal Fighters then?" the lynx asked.

"Well after hearing a lot of cool stuff about Sonic the Hedgehog and his team, I decided the R.F.S. might be fun so I signed up." explained Taran.

"And I decided to join the R.F.S. mainly because I want to rid our world of that Eggman villain." explained Felix "His heathen ways, baneful ambitions and abysmal life-style is so appalling, I feel myself shake angrily as I think about him so I want to help Sonic the Hedgehog get rid of that robot-loving dictator."

"Heh, you really do hate that guy don't you Felix?" chuckled Scott "Me and Jessica joined the R.F.S. because we were just plain fascinated by them and we want to join up and save Mobius from Eggman's wrath."

"It's a strange coincidence how we all sort of signed up at the same time isn't it?" asked Taran "Now we're all back together again and we're all gonna by Royal Fighters! Hey, maybe we could be a team together. Maybe the "Adabat Royal Fighters" or something like that."

"Adabat Royal Fighters has a nice ring to it." said Jessica "I think we should stick with that."

"Alright mates." said Mr. Staffer "Now you've all met each other it's time I gave you all the ground rules. Felix and Taran, you've already been told them so you can step back."

The lynx and peacock stood back, leaving Scott and Jessica to stand to attention and wait for Mr. Staffer to speak.

"Welcome to the Royal Fighters Service Mr. Scott and Miss Jessica." said Mr. Staffer "We're happy to have some new recruits in our team but like all recruits, you'll have to follow the basic rules of the service. When ordered to do something by your superiors, do not answer back or you'll be punished for it, you must obey all orders without questions. You also have to take part in all exercises, unless there's some too difficult for you that is, and you must be up on time every morning. We do not approve of people being late

although we'll let it slide if the recruit has had a late night or a bad night at all. Finally, we work together as a team. We will have no hogging the centre attention or trying to put yourselves above the rest, we respect all our recruits and we treat each other with respect, regardless of ability. Have I made myself clear mates?"

"More then perfectly." said Scott in a well-mannered tone "I will have to warn you though that I'm a bit of a hot-head so I apologize if I overstep myself."

"Don't sweat it lad, we've had bad-tempered recruits before." said Gerald "We'll be on hand to cool you down once you fire up."

"Now you've heard the rules and accepted them you two, you are dismissed to the rest room." said Mr. Staffer "I would begin training but I think you should have a minute to rest after your long trip to Downunda and I think you need some time to get accustomed to the premises as you may be here for a while. We'll begin training tomorrow instead."

"Yes sir." said Jessica with a salute "Thank you sir."

"No problem lass." said Mr. Staffer "Gerald, show them to the rest room if you please."

"Yes Mr. Staffer." said Gerald "This way newcomers." he said, leading Scott and Jessica towards one of the semi-circled buildings on the campsite.

Scott and Jessica followed the ferret in the fedora and Taran and Felix followed them.

"You know what hot stuff?" whispered Scott "I think I like this place already."

"I have a feeling I'm going to enjoy this more then I thought I would." Jessica whispered back "I can't wait to get started tomorrow."

The R.F.S. looked promising so far and hopefully for Scott and Jessica, it would deliver what it promised…

The sunny country of Adabat was still as lively and as bright as ever. The beaches were filled with happy citizens running around on the sand and swimming in the sea that glistened like glass in the bright sunshine. Adabat was notorious for being one of Mobius' happiest countries but even Adabat had its fair share of bad citizens. Ravage Bloodfang, Scott and Jessica's arch-enemy and former Peace Gatherer was sitting on a rocky hilltop, glaring at the happy people that were playing about on the beaches to their heart's content. Ravage had once been part of a peace gathering group but eleven years ago, he was exiled for attempting to use an outlawed weapon, the Sceptre of Fates. He had almost succeeded when he tricked his old friend Bunnie Rabbot into helping him find the sceptre but Bunnie had managed to work out his true motives and she destroyed the weapon. Now Ravage couldn't use the Sceptre of Fates to destroy Adabat like he was hoping too. He rued Adabat for the fact they had banished him for doing something he actually meant to do good with and he wanted the country to pay for this. He held grudges pretty harshly and wouldn't back down from this grudge until Adabat was underwater and wiped off the map. But Ravage wouldn't be able to destroy Adabat if he had no method of doing so, so all he could do was sit around and scheme.

"Just you wait Adabat, I'll destroy you and then you'll rue the day you decided to banish me from here." Ravage growled to himself, chewing a piece of flesh vigorously.

He had just killed an unsuspecting victim and had eaten him for lunch. The carcass lay behind him, collecting flies and rotting away into the earth.

"But how can I destroy a country if I haven't got any weapons on me?" he wondered to himself "I maybe an avid fighter but I haven't got the power to grind the country into dust. I'm going to have to get a new weapon sometime soon. But where? Where…?"

His evil but brilliant mind began to buzz away with any hopes of finding the answer. Then suddenly, a page from a newspaper was blown up into the sky and it sailed towards Ravage as the wind carried it into the air. Ravage saw the page and he caught it in his claws just as it sailed over his head. He wasn't really expecting to find anything riveting to read about but he felt like he should read it

anyway to see what was going on in the world. He read the page in his hand and the column on the page caught his attention. What he saw was a picture of his arch-enemies Scott Lynx and Jessica Cougar boarding a plane to Downunda and waving to the crowd that wished them well in the R.F.S.

"Adabat citizens join Royal Fighters Service." Ravage read aloud to himself "Two residents from Adabat, names Scott Lynx and Jessica Cougar, have joined the Royal Fighters Service and are off to Downunda to get trained up for the ongoing war with Dr. Eggman."

The cloaked wolf in the skull-mask smiled widely and he let go of the page in his hand.

"That turn of events has given me one of my brilliant ideas…" he mused to himself "Scott and Jessica will be a pain for me if they become Royal Fighters but I can handle them easily. I'll kill them before they can become Royal Fighters and I'll steal whatever weapons the Downunda Royal Fighters have and use them to destroy Adabat! And as for getting in…"

He cackled to himself as he thought on his brilliant plan. He stood up from where he was sitting and he wondered off in a certain direction. His big flowing cape blew about in the wind like a waving flag.

"It's just good fortune for me that I know where Downunda is." purred Ravage "Boy will Scott and Jessica be surprised to see me when I arrive at the camp!"

He cackled to himself once again. His plan was foolproof and there was no way it could go horribly wrong for the scarred wolf in the bodysuit and cape. Adabat was as good as destroyed once his plan succeeded…

The next morning dawned bright and sunny (a usual occurrence in Downunda). The new recruits all lined up out on the training grounds as instructed and they waited for Mr. Staffer to give them their first order. Ten minutes later, Mr. Staffer arrived onto the training grounds and he observed Scott, Jessica, Felix and Taran all

standing there waiting to begin the training. He was pleased to see they were all on time and ready to get started. Scott and Jessica in particular looked like they were ready to go.

"Good morning mates." said Mr. Staffer "Nice to see you've obeyed one of the rules of the R.F.S., be on time for anything. Now, let us begin our first training exercise of the day."

He glanced at his schedule board and he read it aloud.

"We have many exercises during the day but we start off with some warm ups. First exercise, everybody drop down and give me fifty."

"Fifty what?" asked Scott.

"Push-ups you pea-brain!" laughed Taran, slapping his brother in the back of the head and knocking him down onto his hands and knees.

The lynx looked stunned to say the least at his task.

"Fifty push-ups just to start?" he said "Huh! Good thing I had a decent breakfast earlier otherwise I'd never be able to do this!"

"Please do not talk during the exercises." said Mr. Staffer "It can distract the others. Now everybody, your time begins…now!"

Jessica, Felix and Taran all went down onto their hands and toes and they began to push their bodies up and down in a rhythm. Scott got into the proper push-up position and joined in with the rhythm of push-ups. He and Jessica were capable of push-ups easily as they had done them before, Felix seemed to be finding push-ups a little difficult to do but Taran was doing the push-ups like lightning. He was even flawlessly doing it on one arm, changing the arm he was using every ten push-ups just so he could exercise both his arms instead of just one. Scott peered at Taran and was amazed at how well his older brother was doing right now.

"Well, I can tell you're no stranger to push-ups Taran!" he blurted "I've never seen you do one before!"

"I usually work out when you're out with Jessica." explained Taran between push-ups "And I REALLY work out. Just look at me! My

biceps are like boulders now!"

"Now I know how you got so big in such short period of time." Scott chuckled to himself.

Poor Felix couldn't seem to keep up with the others. The peacock wasn't as fit as the others so he couldn't keep up with the push-ups as easily as the others. He was managing to push his body up and down but he couldn't keep doing it nice and quickly, he began to slow down as he went along, puffing heavily as he pushed himself up with his arms. Jessica, who was just going onto twenty push-ups, could see her friend was faltering right now and she decided to give him some support to keep him going on the push-up exercise.

"Come on Felix, you can do it." she said to him "Keep trying and you'll do it."

"I appreciate the support Jessica dear but I am afraid it will not help me in this imperative exercise." puffed Felix as he did another push-up "I am not as physically able or as fit as you are and my biceps are lacking in the solid structure someone as fit as Taran has so I'm not as good as push-ups…pant!...as I could be."

"Well if you keep practicing, you'll get there." said Jessica supportively "I know you will."

Felix beamed at his friend's support. No wonder he and Jessica had become such firm friends despite the fact Jessica was in a relationship with Scott Lynx. Felix decided to take in Jessica's advice and try as hard as he can. His face was raining buckets of sweat from the warmth of day and the push-ups he was doing but he willed himself to press on. A few minutes later, Scott, Jessica and Taran made it to fifty and Mr. Staffer ordered them to stop. They stopped the push-ups and they stood up straight, rubbing their aching biceps. Felix however, since he'd slowed down, hadn't even made it to thirty yet but Mr. Staffer didn't see the point in forcing him to do more as the peacock wasn't as able as the others. He had noticed this from training just Felix and Taran a while before Scott and Jessica joined the R.F.S. as they were the first to join. Mr. Staffer told Felix to stop and the peacock stood up, panting and gasping. He had been sweating to hard his shirt looked like it had

been drenched in a swimming pool.

"Good work boys." said Mr. Staffer happily "Felix, you're getting better. I haven't seen you get past twenty before."

"Thank you kindly Mr. Staffer." said Felix "I shall strive to do better."

"Oh you don't have to push yourself Felix, just take your time mate." said Mr. Staffer reassuringly "OK you blokes, we'll take a fifteen minute break and then Gerald will coach you on your next exercise which will be shooting practice."

"Shooting practice?" mused Scott "Me and Jessica will do well at that no doubt what with our energy powers we have."

"I bet you will." said Taran "I wish I'd touched that Sceptre of Fates thingy so I had energy powers like you little bro."

"I bet me and you both having energy powers would be too much for that traitor Ravage Bloodfang!" claimed Scott with a playful smirk on his face "But it's just me and Jessica who have them and you have to be naturally strong instead."

"Being naturally strong's better then not being strong at all I suppose." said Taran "But having energy powers would have been a cool thing to have I bet."

"It is." said Scott "And it's going to pay off for our next exercise in fifteen minutes."

Fifteen minutes later, the new Royal Fighters filed into the shooting grounds, an area where new Royal Fighters trained to be sharp shooters. Anyone who had powers involving shooting things (e.g. Thunder bolts or fire balls) were OK to use them instead of guns but mostly, the new recruits ended up training with guns. Gerald the Ferret stood proudly before the fighters with a musket in his hand.

"OK you blokes, this is shooting practice." announced Gerald "As you can gather, it's where the trainees learn to be sharp shooters and be able to use a gun perfectly."

He pointed at Scott and Jessica.

"You two, according to Queen Sally Acorn of Mobotropolis, you have energy powers so you don't need a gun." said Gerald "Instead, we'll train you to be sharp shooters with your energy powers."

"We've had plenty of practice fighting mercenaries' back home sir." said Jessica "You may be surprised at mine and Scott's accuracy."

"I'm sure I will luv." said Gerald brightly "Now everybody here's the test. Watch closely as you'll be doing this in a minute. Rolf!" He called to a staff member in the distance "Fire the clay pigeon!"

Rolf heard Gerald's call and he fired a clay pigeon into the air. The clay pigeon, which as we know is Frisbee shaped and not pigeon shaped at all, hurtled through the air at top speed. Gerald quickly raised his musket and fired at the clay pigeon. The clay Frisbee shaped object exploded into fragments and rained down onto the ground the moment the bullet hit it. Scott and Jessica gasped in awe. They hadn't seen many sharp shooters in their lives so it was quite a new experience for them.

"We start off with clay pigeons." explained Gerald "And once our recruits get to a more advanced level, we move onto target bots, robots specially built for shooting practice. Scott, would you care to go first mate."

"Anytime." said Scott with a cocky grin on his face.

Scott stood forward and stepped on the marker that marked where the shooter was supposed to stand. He summoned a ball of green energy around his right hand and he prepared to throw it at the clay pigeon once it was fired. Gerald stared at Scott's hand in wonder. He hadn't seen many energy-powered Mobians before so this wasn't a common experience for him.

"OK mate, you just stand there and wait for the pigeon to fire." said Gerald "Don't jump the gun on this one (if you'll excuse the pun). You'll have to be patient and use your reflexes for this test."

"OK sir, I've got it." said Scott, bending down in a battle ready stance

"I'm ready when you are."

"Good on ya mate." said Gerald "Rolf, fire the pigeon!"

Rolf fired the clay pigeon into the air and it hurtled through the air at an incredible speed. Scott immediately pointed forward and fired an energy spear at the pigeon. The clay pigeon was stricken by the energy spear and it was destroyed in a nanosecond. The pieces fell to the ground like falling snow. Gerald was amazed at that attack. Perfect accuracy and perfect speed that was fired at! The boy was better then he thought!

"Well done Scott!" blurted Gerald "That was a perfect shot!"

"Jessica did say we've had practice." said Scott smugly "Shooting's one of my specialties."

"In that case, maybe I'd better put you onto the advanced level already." said Gerald "You may stand back now Scott. Jessica luv, please come up."

Scott walked back to the sidelines and Jessica went up in his place. She stood on the marker and prepared to shoot. She summoned some energy to her hand and she waited for the pigeon to fire.

"OK Jessica, just like I've told Scott, you'll need to relay on patience and reflexes for this test." explained Gerald "I'm expecting this shoot to be a good un but I'm just saying that you'll need those traits for shooting practice."

"I know." said Jessica "Patience as you wait for the target and reflexes for the shot. That's what my dad told me whenever he told me about his gun collection he had in his shed at home."

"I see." said Gerald "Rolf, fire the pigeon!"

Once again, Rolf fired the clay pigeon into the air for the third time today. The clay pigeon hurtled through the sky at a fast speed and Jessica fired an energy spear from her hand at the pigeon. The shot wasn't as accurate as Scott's though, it just clipped the edge of the pigeon and the pigeon fell down to the ground with a nasty chip on its side. Scott was a better shooter then Jessica due to the fact the

lynx had practiced a little more. Gerald was expecting Jessica's shot to be just as good as Scott's but it was slightly mediocre at best. It was still a good shot at the very least.

"Not bad Jessica." said Gerald "Not quite as impressive as Scott's but still good."

"Scott's practiced shooting more then I have so he's slightly better then me." said Jessica I'm still pretty good at least."

"I'd definitely say so lass." said Gerald "I'm pretty sure you'd do well at the advanced level just like I'm sure Scott would do well at the advanced level of shooting practice. You may switch places with Taran now."

Jessica did as she was told and she walked onto the side lines. Taran stood forward and Gerald handed him his musket. The broad and muscular lynx stood on the marker and waited to begin.

"I know you'd much rather be a brawns person but there might be a time you'll need a weapon such as this so it's best if you know how to use one well Taran." said Gerald "You've had some good shots already on your time here so show the new arrivals how well you can do."

"OK sir." said Taran, clocking the musket and preparing to fire it "Fire whenever you're ready."

Gerald nodded and he called over to Rolf once again.

"Rolf! Fire the pigeon!"

Rolf fired yet another clay pigeon into the air. Taran raised up the musket and aimed at the spinning disc as it sped through the air at a great speed. Taran fired the musket but the loud bang the musket made as it fired made him jump and he dropped the weapon onto his foot. Taran yelped in pain and he clutched his sore toes. The bullet luckily enough had managed to hit the clay pigeon and it crumbled to pieces in the air after being hit. The pieces fell onto the ground like rain drops. Taran stopped hopping about and he placed his foot back down on the ground, wriggling his toes to ease the pain

a little. Scott and Jessica had no idea what to make out of that gaff. Did Taran usually do this or was this a little slip up of his? Gerald patted Taran on the back as the lynx began grimacing at the pain in his foot.

"What happened Taran?" asked Gerald "You don't usually do that?"

"Sorry sir, it's just the musket's noise is a lot louder then the rifles I've used before and it startledme." said Taran, rubbing his ears "I have sensitive ears and loud bangs can hurt me. Can I have some earphones next time sir?"

"You certainly may." said Gerald "No point being able to use a gun if you can't stand the noise. Felix, it's your turn now. Maybe you can show Scott and Jessica how well you've done."

Taran hopped back onto the sidelines and Felix strode up pride fully to the marker.

Felix picked up the dropped musket and he clocked it for another shot. He stood on the marker and he waited to fire. His tail feathers twitched and stiffened as he prepared to shoot.

"OK Felix, you remember how to do this right?" asked Gerald.

"I most certainly do commander." said Felix "I have to keep my gun primed and ready, then raised to the best possible position and then I pull the trigger and let the clay pigeon have it."

"Good to see you've been paying attention." said Gerald brightly "Rolf, fire the last pigeon!"

Rolf obeyed and he fired the last clay pigeon into the air. He fired it once again and the pigeon whizzed through the air like a Frisbee. Felix however, didn't fire the musket like he did before. Instead, he put the musket down, pulled one of his beautiful tail-feathers off his bottom and the peacock threw it at the pigeon like a javelin. The stiffened feather whizzed through the air faster then a thrown dart and it ploughed straight through the clay pigeon like a truck driving through a brick wall and split it neatly in half. The two halves fell down to the ground and broke into even smaller pieces. Scott,

Jessica and Taran both stared at the green peacock in the yellow vest in surprise. Taran in particular as he hadn't expected Felix to be a good feather thrower. The peacock just smiled proudly and he held his hand out. The feather fell back into his hand and he reattached it onto his bottom. Gerald didn't know what to say about that amazing act of Felix's.

"Um…impressive." said Gerald "I guess that's why you wanted another shot."

"Affirmative sir." said Felix with a salute "I wanted to show you all that I am able to use my feathers as projectile weapons as well as battering weapons."

"Why didn't you show me this already?" asked Gerald.

"I didn't feel like it before." said Felix "But Scott and Jessica's arrival gave me the feeling to perform this act."

"Hmm…indeed." said Gerald "Well; you can use a gun or your feathers it seems. Either way, you're very good at this. Well done Felix."

Felix just walked back to the sidelines with a big smile on his face. Felix did have a habit of thinking highly of himself but he wasn't as big an egotist as say Lord Sycorax or Scourge the Hedgehog. He knew when not to let his ego get the best of him, hence the reason he didn't usually brag about his abilities to the others when he performed well. The moment Felix stepped onto the sidelines, Scott and Jessica began to bombard him with compliments and questions.

"That's so cool Felix!" cried Scott "I didn't know you were that good with a gun or your feathers!"

"I didn't even know you could throw your feathers like that." said Jessica "How did you learn how to do so?"

"In your two's absence, I began to wonder if my feathers could be useful for any other kind of weaponry." explained Felix "I mainly use them as battering weapons but I felt like they could be used as another weapon. That's when I realized I can throw them like

javelins and I can use them as projectile weapons so before joining the R.F.S., I decided to practice throwing my feathers so I can use them for other weaponry purposes."

"I see." said Jessica "You know since you have so many, you could lend us a feather or two to use as a weapon in battle."

"I could indeed." said Felix brightly "Although you and Scott already have weapons, your energy powers so you don't need a weapon."

"I don't have a weapon." muttered Taran "I've just got my strength."

"Strength is a very important weapon to any fighter Taran." said Gerald, who had overheard the conversation between the fighters "Just because you don't have a weapon, it doesn't mean you're unable to fight. People are able to fight with just their bare fists you know and I bet you'd be very good at physical combat Taran."

"I know he'll be good at physical combat." said Scott "I've seen him fight before."

"You have haven't you little bro?" said Taran "I agree with Gerald. You three can use your weapons and I can use my strength in battle. What a combo that'll be won't it?"

"I can see it being very affective Taran." said Felix "We've got quite a way to go before we can enter the battle field unfortunately so we won't be able to see how affective our weapon combo will be."

"OK you blokes, shooting practice is over." said Gerald "Report to Mr. Staffer for pull-up practice."

The Royal Fighters left the shooting grounds and went off to find Mr. Staffer for their next exercise.

The Royal Fighters lined up on the training grounds once again and Mr. Staffer stood to their attention with Gerald beside him. Mr. Staffer marked off "shooting practice" on his schedule board and he looked back up at his trainees. He was impressed with what he had heard from Gerald after he told him about the shooting practice.

"Attention mates." said Mr. Staffer "It seems I've gotten a good report about your shooting skills. Gerald tells me you've all excelled well in shooting practice. Scott and Jessica in particular impressed him and Felix showed him a new skill he has. I'm impressed with you all. Well done mates."

"Thank you sir." said the Royal Fighters.

"I can see you blokes well on the way to becoming a team of Royal Fighters for Adabat." said Mr. Staffer "Taran and Felix are excelling will and Scott and Jessica's previous experience in combat appears to be paying off. Well there's still more to come mates. Right now it's a pull-up exercise. After the pull-ups we can have a spot of lunch and then after that it's onto jogging exercises and then the obstacle course as the last exercise of the day."

"That sounds good sir." said Scott "Especially the obstacle course. I look forward to it."

"That's nice to hear." said Mr. Staffer "OK everybody, it's time for you all to give me fifty pull-ups. Your time starts…"

"Excuse me sir." came a portly gentlemen sounding voice from behind.

Mr. Staffer stopped what he was doing and he turned around to face the person who suddenly spoke to him. Gerald turned around too. Scott, Jessica, Taran and Felix peeked their heads around Mr. Staffer and they stared in surprise at who they saw. It was none other then Ravage Bloodfang standing before the generals with a polite grin on his face and his arms behind his back in a gentlemanly manner.

"Is there any room in the R.F.S for a heroic wolf such as myself?" asked Ravage in a fake polite tone.

Footnotes:

*** See Arc 7 for the whole tale**

**** See Arc 4**

You know some serious sh*t is gonna happen now Ravage Bloodfang's here! Why does he want to join the R.F.S? And what evil plan does the wolf have hidden in his cape? Join me next time for Part 2...Read and Review.

Meanwhile, tune into* Heroes of Mobius *as Dr. Eggman plans a prison escape!

New Recruits 2

Arc 9: New Recruits

Takes place during Stories 76-78 in Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius

Part 2: Villainous Sign-Up

The Downunda Royal Fighters were spending a busy day training up new recruits and Adabat residents Scott Lynx and Jessica Cougar as well as Scott's big brother Taran the Lynx and Jessica's friend Felix the Peacock, two Adabat residents who have not long since joined the service. Their tightly scheduled training day however was interrupted by the arrival of an unwelcome guest, Ravage Bloodfang, the traitor of Adabat. The wolf had just come up to Mr. Staffer and was asking him if he could sign up at all. Scott's reaction to this was beyond furious and angry.

"Ravage Bloodfang?" he yelled, summoning concentrated energy to his hands and running up to the wolf angrily "What are you doing here you limey little creep?"

He pounced on Ravage angrily but the wolf just smacked him away and sent him crashing face first into the tarmac. Scott rubbed his throbbing nose and he picked himself up. Jessica ran over to him to comfort him. Ravage snarled angrily at the lynx.

"Poor wretched child!" he growled "Pity your mother didn't tell you it's rude to pounce on people for no reason!"

"I bloody well do have a reason Ravage!" snapped Scott, his hand fizzling with pure concentrated energy that itched to fire at him "You're the enemy of Adabat and the one person who tried to purge the country with fire with the forbidden Sceptre of Fates! You're evil and me and Jessica are going to destroy you!"

The moment Scott revealed Ravage's nature, Felix stiffened his tail feathers and pulled two of them out of his bottom and prepared to

batter Ravage with them. Taran bent down in a battle ready stance and prepared to slug him like there was no tomorrow.

"So you're this Ravage Bloodfang guy my little bro's told me about?" he said crossly "You're uglier then I imagined and unluckily for you, I have a big problem with people who bully my brother and his girlfriend!"

"We shall smite you villain!" declared Felix "Now stand down while you have the chance! Otherwise we will have to unleash our valiant strength on you and the end result will unspeakably grizzly indeed!"

Ravage just grinned evilly at the angry Royal Fighters that were prepared to beat the stuffing out of him just for showing up.

"Oh calm those overly jumpy nerves of yours you foolish little kids." he snorted "I didn't come all the way here looking for a fight."

"How do we know that you're not lying you devil?" hissed Jessica, summoning energy to her hands and itching to throw it at Ravage or blast him with it.

"If I wanted a fight, I would have crept up behind the weasel in the jacket and snapped his neck in front of your eyes." said Ravage with a creepy sneer in his eyes "But I didn't so it means I'm not here for a fight."

"Then what are you here for you disgusting little toe-rag?" snarled Scott, his hands glowing bright green now.

"I am here to join the Royal Fighters Service, the esteemed army that is our only stronghold against that ruthless vermin Dr. Eggman." lied Ravage.

"No you don't!" growled Scott "You want to kill us all and ransack the service! Well you won't succeed so there! Get out of here before we all use you as punching bag!"

Ravage just flashed his shiny white teeth at his enemies. They sparkled like knives in a drawer.

"I will not leave." purred Ravage "I am staying right here if you

please."

He then turned his back on the Adabat residents and faced Mr. Staffer and Gerald, who stared at him in wonder, clearly afraid of his rather intimidating appearance.

"My dear commanders, forgive the abrupt appearance if you will." said Ravage "I am an Adabat resident who wishes to join the R.F.S. and help fight against Dr. Eggman and his forces. Is there a spot for me anywhere?"

"I'm not sure we should let you in Ravage sir." said Mr. Staffer coldly "Scott and Jessica claim you are evil and you tried to purge Adabat with a forbidden weapon of some kind. Is that true?"

"It is my good man." said Ravage "But I had good intentions originally. You see, I used to be part of a Peace Gathering group eleven years ago. Fellow Royal Fighter Bunnie Rabbot was also part of the group, I believe you'll probably know her."

"We do indeed mate." said Gerald "Bunnie's with the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters so you won't find her here."

"Indeed." said Ravage "Carrying on, the group disbanded after Bunnie's mother died but I vowed to fulfil the destiny of the disbanded group so I tried to use a weapon called the Sceptre of Fates to better the world and purge the world of sin. Unfortunately, it was outlawed and I got into trouble for it. I was exiled and scarred and I vowed revenge on the country. I came back and tried to destroy Adabat again but Bunnie Rabbot stopped me*. After that time I began to think about my actions and ambitions. I thought to myself "What's the point of being vengeful if all it does is bring you worse then before?" so I've decided to give myself a chance to redeem myself for my appalling actions before. And my only chance to redeem myself is right here in front of me. An opportunity to join the R.F.S. and become a Royal Fighter and help fight against evil. Not to mention I can fulfil the destiny of the disbanded Peace Gatherers."

Scott and Jessica couldn't believe what they were hearing. Ravage wished to be a good guy? He was hoping to redeem himself? The

fight with Bunnie Rabbot and his defeat at Geoffrey St. John's hands had clearly changed him hadn't it? But was he telling the truth? Or is this all a sneaky trick of his? The two had no idea what to think. As for Taran and Felix, they just looked at each other.

"Ravage doesn't seem to be as bad as what Scotty thinks." Taran said quietly.

"It seems Ravage wishes to defer to the good side once again." said Felix "Makes him better then other villains at least."

As for Mr. Staffer, he had taken in Ravage's story well and he put a finger to his lips.

"Hmm…a villain who wishes to change his wicked ways and become a Royal Fighter." he mused under his breath "Now that is an interesting thought. We haven't had many evil-doers defer to our side so this will be a nice change for us Royal Fighters."

He turned around and pulled Gerald to him. The jacket wearing weasel and the fedora wearing ferret began to whisper to one another. Ravage didn't attempt to eavesdrop on them, he stood there waiting for them to finish talking.

"What do you think we should do Gerald?" asked Mr. Staffer "Should we let him in?"

"Villains are very shifty characters after all and they've been known for deception." noted Gerald "But Ravage was part of a peace gathering group once apparently so he's not as shady as villains such as Dr. Eggman. He also claims he wants to redeem himself for his evil before. He could be fooling us but we can't be fully sure. We're going to have to keep an eye on him should we let him in."

"We'll let him in but the moment he does anything evil, we'll be on hand to kick him out double quick." said Mr. Staffer "Then it's settled, we'll let him in."

Mr. Staffer and Gerald stopped whispering to one another and they turned back around to face Ravage.

"Ravage, after much deliberation, we have decided to grant your

request." said Mr. Staffer dully "BUT if you so much as attempt any act of an evil nature, we will kick you out and send you back to wherever it was you were exiled to."

"Very well then." said Ravage "I can easily see the reason for this, you're not willing to trust me yet as I'm a pretty shady character and I've had a shady past. Thank you for giving me a chance to redeem myself you two." said Ravage happily.

"Don't mention it." said Mr. Staffer "Would you like to join the others in their training sessions?"

"No sir, I am quite capable of combat and I do not need lessons." said Ravage "I'll be happy to watch the trainees train though."

"Alright then." said Mr. Staffer "Now where was I? Oh yes…Scott, Jessica, Felix and Taran. Fifty pull-ups now!"

"Yes sir." said the trainees.

The trainees all ran over to the pull-up apparatuses on the other side of the grounds and they instantly began to perform the exercise. Scott grabbed the bar and using all the strength he had in his body, he pulled himself up with his arms and he rested his chin on the bar. Then he lowered himself back down, but not putting his feet firmly down on the ground as he did so and he pulled himself up again. Jessica, Taran and Felix all did the same. Pull-ups were notoriously harder then push-ups as you had to lift your entire body off the ground but the trainees were a determined bunch and they were going to do the exercise no matter how tough it was. Felix unfortunately, was even worse at pull-ups then push-ups and he was having trouble lifting his body up so much as five inches. Felix was more on weaponry then physical strength after all. Taran however, was doing the pull-ups easily. He effortlessly pulled himself up and down and up and down with little effort. He was more on physical strength then weaponry so he did much better at muscle exercises then Felix. Scott wasn't surprised at how well his brother was doing as he'd seen him exercise plenty of times before. Ravage Bloodfang stood with Mr. Staffer and Gerald and watched as the trainees began to exercise as hard as they could. Ravage wasn't surprised at how well Scott and Jessica were doing right now. He'd

had plenty of experience with them in Adabat so he knew how strong they were and he knew they'd be doing well at the exercises.

"They're quite the devotees aren't they Ravage?" asked Mr. Staffer "They do as they're instructed and all without question too."

"Well what's the point of having an army of soldiers that loathe your guts and would much rather gut you like a fish then serve you commander?" snorted Ravage "It's good to see that your trainees are eager to become Royal Fighters. After all in these dark times we could do with all the help we can get against that Dr. Eggman menace."

"We sure could." said Gerald "By the way Ravage, since you used to be part of a Peace Gathering group, do you know where the other members of your group have gone? If so then maybe we could recruit them and you could reunite the Peace Gatherers and they could help us fight for Mobius."

"The whole group sans myself, Bunnie and her father was unfortunately roboticized." said Ravage "I've managed to get them under my control though so they do not serve Eggman, they serve me instead and unfortunately, I don't know how to de-roboticize them so they can't become Royal Fighters unfortunately."

"Aw, that's too bad." said Gerald "Well I remember hearing something about Sonic's twin-tailed friend Tails stealing one of Eggman's inventions and setting it in reverse so it de-roboticizes people instead of roboticizing them** so I could call Mobotropolis and ask if we could borrow that machine and de-roboticize your former group members with it."

"Now that would be splendid wouldn't it?" purred Ravage "Although we disbanded because Bunnie's mother was the heart and soul of the group and we felt it would be disrespectful to continue without her so even if I de-roboticize them, the group won't reunite. However, I'm sure they'd happily accept a new career as a Royal Fighter once we ask them."

"It would be nice if they agreed." said Mr. Staffer "But I won't mind too much if they say no."

Meanwhile, Scott had turned his head into Ravage's direction and was watching him talk to Mr. Staffer and Gerald as he continued to pull himself up and down. He began to wonder what Ravage was talking to the two about but he didn't dare try to find out, he just kept on the pull-ups. He and Jessica were almost on thirty now.

"Hey! Psst! Jessica!" hissed Scott as he lowered himself down for another pull-up.

"Yes?" asked Jessica just as she pulled herself up.

"I don't trust Ravage one little bit." whispered Scott as he pulled himself up "I have a horrible feeling in my gut he's plotting something."

"I have that horrible feeling in my gut too." said Jessica, lowering herself down "But we can't be too sure that Ravage is lying. True his change of heart seems so sudden and it's a very strange coincidence he wanted to become a Royal Fighter just as we start training to become one but we can't prove that he's evil right now so we've got to see how this turns out or see if we can find out what he's really up to."

"I'm actually hoping Ravage has turned good and we have nothing to worry about." said Scott, lowering himself down "But that's just wishful thinking isn't it?"

"Could be." said Jessica "Or it might not be. We'll see as our training goes on I guess."

Scott nodded agreeably as he and Jessica did their thirty-fourth pull-up. The two really didn't think Ravage was here to turn good and redeem himself but they couldn't jump to conclusions yet, they had to wait and see how this all turns out…

Later that day the pull-up exercises had been finished and it was time for lunch. Scott, Jessica, Felix and Taran all headed to the military cafeteria, the place were mealtimes were had. Mr. Staffer and Gerald didn't have their lunches in the cafeteria; they had theirs

in their quarters. Ravage however, stayed out on the grounds and waited until there was no one about. The wolf had just recently eaten so he didn't need anything to eat right now. But that wasn't the reason he was still on the grounds. He decided to put the first part of his brilliant idea into action. Just to be mean, he was going to sabotage the obstacle course and make Scott, Jessica, Felix and Taran look very foolish and slow down their training. Not to mention, it would be one way of him getting his own back on Scott and Jessica for all the times they'd bothered him. The caped wolf crept around the camp and searched for the obstacle course. It didn't take him long to find it as the obstacle course was on the other side of the camp and it was marked with a sign saying "Obstacle Course". Ravage grinned widely, his sharp white teeth glistening like diamonds.

"There it is." he purred to himself "Now's the time to make those fools look even more foolish."

He crept into the obstacle course and admired the circuit. The course was a circle circuit with many obstacles to hinder the runner. There were hurdles to jump over, a 3 foot deep pool to leap over, a monkey bar apparatus with a mud puddle underneath it, a tightrope stretched across a puddle of water to walk across and an apparatus with some chains to swing from. The course was marked with a Start post at the beginning and a Finish Post at the end. The course's obstacles were built to be suitable for ages 16+ so this course was just perfect for the trainees. Ravage was impressed with the course. He hadn't expected there to be so many jumps and balances to do on it.

"Well this is a good course isn't it?" he said to himself "Well I'll make it EVEN better once I'm finished with it."

He crept away from the course and began looking for a warehouse. It took him a while to find the warehouse but he found it in the end. The warehouse was a semi-circle building with spare equipment for the obstacles and tools to build things with. Ravage saw a collection of spare hurdles and he observed them. The hurdles were a little taller then the ones on the course so he grabbed them. There were ten hurdles on the course itself so he grabbed ten of the taller ones. He took them out of the warehouse and crept onto the obstacle

course with them. He then went back into the warehouse and collected a variety of tools. After a long rummage through the warehouse, he came back out with a saw, a bucket of grease, a hammer and a box of nails. He took the tools all the way over to the obstacle course and began his work. He grabbed all ten hurdles on the course and hid them back in the warehouse. He then returned to the course and set up the ten higher hurdles he had taken out of the warehouse and he set them up so carefully, they looked like they had been there all the time. But to add insult to injury, Ravage took some nails and hammered about three nails into the top of each hurdle. The top of the nail was sticking out two inches and if anyone leaped over the hurdle, they'd probably get their clothes caught on the nail and they would either trip over or rip them. The higher hurdles would probably be a little too high for them to jump over anyway. Ravage chortled to himself and he crept over to the pool you had to leap over. He painted a patch of grease onto the leap spot so anyone running up to it would like slip on the grease patch and fall into the water with hilarious outcomes. After doing that, Ravage went over to the monkey bars. He climbed on top of the monkey bars and painted the first two bars with grease. The grease would cause anyone to slip off and fall into the mud puddle with a hilarious splat. Ravage tried to contain his laughter as he moved onto the next obstacle. It was the tightrope next and it was a long tightrope stretched tightly across a puddle of water that appeared to be only a foot deep. Ravage got out the saw he stole from the warehouse and he slightly sawed the tightrope. He sawed it to the point where the rope was clinging together by a thread and it would snap the moment somebody stood on it. Ravage could just picture the trainees falling off the rope right now. He moved onto the final obstacle which was the swinging apparatus. There was a step you stood on and grabbed the first chain. When you did that, you swung from the step and onto the next chain and you had to keep it up until you made it to the end. Ravage painted the first chain with grease so that anyone who grabbed it would just fall off it due to how slippery it was now. Trying to hold the chain would be like trying to hold a bar of soap due to how much grease Ravage put on it. Ravage admired his handiwork and he quickly ran off back to the warehouse with his tools in hand. He put the tools back carefully so it didn't look like they'd been moved at all. Ravage cackled to himself as he left the warehouse and he paced off to the headquarters.

"Ha, ha, ha." he sniggered "Let's see you four morons conquer my new and improved obstacle course! I bet you won't though!"

He began to picture the chaotic scene that would unfold before him as they tried to go through the obstacle course. It would be a sight worth seeing and truly a funny sight to behold. After the obstacle course was over, he would ask for a tour of the camp and see if he could find any dangerous weapons he could use to destroy Adabat with. After all, a Royal Fighters Service campsite was bound to have some kind of bomb or something and he had a feeling they would be dangerous and powerful and there might be one strong enough to level a country, a country he longed to destroy…

An hour after lunch, Mr. Staffer and Gerald took the trainees to the obstacle course, their very next exercise and after the obstacle course; it would be some lengthy jogging that went on for quite a while. Scott, Jessica, Felix and Taran all lined up as they waited for Mr. Staffer to give them the go signal whereas Ravage stood away from the trainees as he wasn't taking part in this. Scott was a little suspicious of the caped wolf since he hadn't shown up at lunchtime and he began to wonder what Ravage had been up to while he and the others were eating. But now was not the time for wondering, now was the time to exercise and show the Royal Fighter commanders how good at obstacle courses he was. Mr. Staffer stood to attention and he cleared his throat.

"Alright mates, here's your next exercise, and a personal favourite of many." he announced "The obstacle course. As you can see, it's just a hearty lap around this very course which you see before you. The course can be altered for advanced and less advanced trainees and seeing as you're all already doing so well at your training, particularly the newest arrivals, we've set it to your level, which is advanced. Who would like to go first."

Scott's hand immediately shot up. He was a bit of an eager person and he loved to be first at activities. Ravage rolled his eyes, not really surprised Scott would be willing to go first but he didn't mind, at least he'd get to laugh at his nemesis when he fell for the improvements he made to the course. Mr. Staffer noticed Scott's

eagerness and he pointed at the lynx in the shorts.

"OK Scotty boy, you may go first." said Mr. Staffer "Nice to see such an eager new recruit ready to have a go at something."

"Thank you sir." said Scott "And don't call me Scotty, it's embarrassing to me. It's a habit my brother picked up just to annoy me."

He glared at Taran who only smiled gormlessly and shrugged his shoulders.

"My apologies mate." said Mr. Staffer "Now word of advice lad, don't get too carried away in this course. It is possible you can hurt yourself and we don't approve of showing off."

"Showing off?" scoffed Scott as if he'd never heard of such an expression "Showing off is the very thing I never do sir."

"Yeah right." snickered Taran "You used to show off a lot when you got your energy powers bro! And I believe you once showed off just to impress your pretty girlfriend here!" he motioned playfully to Jessica.

Taran, Felix and Gerald all burst into hysterical laughter at that little statement. Jessica giggled with them as she knew what Taran was talking about. Scott was a show-off at heart even though he didn't really mean to be one most of the time. Even Ravage chuckled with them. He definitely knew how much of a show-off Scott was as he would always act tough and try to defeat him with little success. Scott just fumed at Taran's wisecrack and his face went bright red with embarrassment. It seemed he couldn't escape from embarrassment anywhere he went.

"Taran, if you can't say anything without making me look stupid then don't say anything at all!" yelled Scott angrily, his fists glowing green with anger.

"Oh don't be such a baby Scott, it's only a joke!" snapped Taran.

"It's only a joke if it's funny Taran!" retorted Scott "I don't find it funny so it isn't a joke!"

"You two, stop shouting at each other or I'll bash your bloody brains out!" snapped Ravage, baring his sharp white teeth at the two lynxes.

"You can shut up Ravage!" snapped Scott "You maybe willing to change sides but that doesn't mean you can boss me around like I'm your sidekick or something!"

"I am not trying to boss you around you ignorant pup!" retorted Ravage "I'm just trying to settle this dispute without having to resort to physical violence!"

"It's not up to you to stick your nose in where it doesn't belong!" yelled Scott, pure energy circling around his wrists now "This was between me and Taran and you had no right to butt in Ravage!"

Scott and Ravage both glared at each other and they clenched their fists, ready to unleash hell on each other and fight to the death.

"Mates, mates! Enough!" bellowed Mr. Staffer angrily, waving his arms around angrily and stepping in between the lynx and wolf "Scott, don't ever let me see that kind of behaviour again or you'll be relieved of your position! We don't take hot-heads in the R.F.S.!

Scott's fists stopped glowing green and he put his hands behind his back. He relaxed his expression and he looked down at the ground sadly.

"Yes sir. Sorry sir." said Scott quietly.

"And Ravage, while I appreciate you trying to keep things under control, it's my job to keep order in this camp." said Mr. Staffer "You stay out of this next time, especially as the trainees are a little nervous about you."

"Understood sir." lied Ravage, saluting loyally to him. He wished Mr. Staffer hadn't interfered with him and Scott but he wasn't here to start a fight so he didn't do anything else.

"OK, now we've got that settled, are you ready to go Scott?" asked Mr. Staffer.

"Yes sir." said Scott, striding in a prideful manner over to the start line.

The lynx bent down in a starter position and he waited for Mr. Staffer to give the command to go. Mr. Staffer pulled a pistol out of his belt holster and he pointed it straight up at the sky. Taran quickly covered his ears as he didn't like the sound of guns going off. Mr. Staffer put a finger in his ear and counted down.

"Three…two…one…go!"

He fired the pistol and it went off with a loud bang. Scott leaped into action like a jackrabbit and he jogged towards the first obstacle as fast as his agile legs would carry him. The others stood on the sidelines and watched as the lynx began his obstacle course run. Ravage just grinned like a hobgoblin, waiting in anticipation for the string of epic fails that the lynx was going to get tangled up in. After a good jog Scott came to the first obstacle. The hurdles. Ten hurdles all lined up neatly in a row for the runner to jump over. Scott smirked cockily and he leaped into the air. But since Ravage had sabotaged the course and replaced the hurdles with bigger hurdles, Scott didn't make it and he ended up tripping over the hurdle. The startled lynx fell forward without knowing what had happened and he fell flat onto his face. Felix put his hand over his beak and tried to resist the urge to laugh. He failed. Taran however, didn't know if he should laugh or grimace in an "Ooooh, that's gotta hurt!" manner. Jessica just stared at Scott and wondered what was going in. The lynx was usually a good jumper, he could clear a hurdle easily and yet he'd just tripped on one. Ravage, not surprisingly, burst into a fit of laughter. The wolf knew this was going to be funny and just as he thought, it was incredibly funny to see his nemesis trip on a hurdle. Mr. Staffer and Gerald exchanged glances and they murmured to one another.

"Doesn't seem like he's a good jumper." mused Mr. Staffer.

"He seemed like a potentially good student earlier." said Gerald "Maybe athletic exercises aren't his speciality. Still, practice makes perfect as they say so maybe he'll improve the more he does it."

The weasel and ferret turned their attention back to the course just as Scott picked himself up and rubbed his face better. The lynx

started running again and he tried to jump over another hurdle. He failed and he tripped on that one as well. He ended up getting another sore nose after that one. The lynx picked himself up, rubbed himself better and he ran onto the third hurdle. He jumped but once again, he tripped over it as Ravage had picked hurdles that were much too high for a seventeen year old lynx to leap over. Scott picked himself up and tried to jump over the fourth hurdle. He tripped again but this time, his shorts got caught on one of the nails that Ravage had nailed into the top of the hurdle, thus making this trip even more comical to anyone watching. This was too much, Ravage began to laugh so hard he looked like he was about to bust a gut. Felix laughed even harder too whereas Taran tried to resist the urge to snicker at his brother who had just gotten his shorts caught on a hurdle. Jessica hid her face so she couldn't see Scott's bare bottom as she wasn't the kind of girl who liked to see boys with no clothes on. Mr. Staffer surveyed this performance and began thinking again.

"That's never happened before." he mused "Maybe I should change the hurdles so nobody else gets their clothes caught on it. They have been used a lot so maybe they're not in the best condition."

"I'll inspect them for wear and tear at dinner time sir." said Gerald.

"Very good Gerald." said Mr. Staffer, turning his attention back to the lynx on the obstacle course.

Scott had just freed his shorts from the hurdle without ripping them and he ran onto the fifth hurdle. Yet again, he tripped over it while trying to leap over it but he managed to scratch his leg on one of the nails Ravage had nailed into the hurdle. Scott grimaced in pain and he clutched his leg. Pain seemed to flood up his leg like a raging river and it began to sting a lot.

"Ow! Goddamn it that hurt!" he screamed "Who set up this course?"

He looked at the long thin cut on his leg. It was down the side near his calf muscles and it was trickling with blood. He'd have to see the medical staff after this. Regardless, Scott was a strong boy and he didn't let his injuries slow him down so he continued with the course. He ran onto the sixth hurdle but like the other five; he tripped over it

and landed on his face. He picked himself up and ran onto the seventh hurdle and again, he tripped over it. Jessica was getting tired of watching her boyfriend hurt himself so she cupped her hands around her mouth and yelled to him.

"Scott! Stop! Please, all you're doing is hurting yourself!" she called to him "Just stop what you're doing right now!"

Scott ignored the cougar and he continued on. He tried the last three hurdles and tripped over all of them. On the last one, he got his shorts caught on the nail again and they ripped a tiny hole in them but all you could see is the netting in the shorts so the hole wasn't showing off anything embarrassing luckily for the lynx. Scott rubbed himself better and he fumed at the hurdles. His nose had swollen and become bright red in colour due to excessive bumping of it whenever he tripped over the hurdle. His leg was stinging with pain and he felt like a total fool after constantly tripping over the hurdles. Ravage was laughing so hard he couldn't contain himself and he even found himself falling over onto his side, clutching his aching ribs but Scott didn't seem to notice. He was too busy grumbling to himself.

"Stupid hurdles!" he muttered to himself "Making a fool outta me! The strange thing is I'm usually good at leaping over obstacles! Maybe Mr. Staffer thinks too highly of me and he made this too advanced for me. Oh well, I may as well finish this off and see how I go the rest of the way."

With that said, Scott ran on to the next obstacle at top speed. The next obstacle was the three foot deep pool. Scott smiled to himself. He couldn't possibly mess up on that obstacle. He ran too the pool as fast as he could and…he slipped on the grease patch that Ravage had painted near the jump point and he fell head over heels into the pool with a large, comical splash. Water flew everywhere after that splash and everybody sans Jessica, Mr. Staffer and Gerald burst into hysterical laughter. Ravage was still on the floor laughing like a hyena whereas Felix and Taran looked like they were about to fall on the floor and join him.

"Well, the boy seems to excel better…ha, ha, ha!...at providing us with…hee, hee!...some comical entertainment…snicker!...then

conquering an obstacle course!" laughed Felix.

"I probably shouldn't laugh but…hee, hee!...this is too funny!" snickered Taran.

"You two, stop laughing at poor Scott!" yelled Jessica crossly "You're gonna make him feel like a total fool! You wouldn't like it if Scott laughed at you for doing so badly at something!"

The two laughing friends didn't even hear Jessica. They were laughing too hard. The cougar fumed angrily and turned her back on the lynx and peacock. As for Gerald, he took in Scott's epic fail and noted it.

"Seems tripping over the hurdles has caused him to lose his footing." he said "He just tripped over his own feet and fell into the water. I guess he's not very good at athletic exercises is he? He's a sharper shooter then a runner."

"Indeed so Gerald." said Mr. Staffer "I may have to give him extra athlete lessons in order to get him a little fitter and more athlete worthy."

As for Scott, he climbed out of the pool and shook himself dry. He scowled at the pool and muttered crossly to himself.

"What the hell happened there?" asked Scott "I just…slipped and fell in. Maybe that was accident, I dunno but it better not happen again."

He ran off to the next obstacle which was the monkey bars, one of his favourite things to play on in a playground during his childhood. The lynx stepped onto the step and grabbed the first monkey bar. He looked down and wasn't pleased to see that the bars were above a mud puddle but he was confident he wasn't going to fall or mess up on this one. He took his feet off the step, swung himself to the next bar and…slipped off the bar due to the fact Ravage had greased them. He didn't feel the grease on his hands as it had dried already but it was still slippery. Scott fell straight into the mud puddle with an enormous splat. Mud flew everywhere and splattered the ground around him. Scott was now completely drenched in mud. Felix and Taran resisted the urge to laugh this time around as they

felt it was too cruel to laugh at Scott for that. Jessica just watched her boyfriend sadly, wondering why he was failing so badly at this course. Mr. Staffer took note of this and wondered on something.

"That's strange, Scott is able to successfully do a pull-up but he cannot do the monkey bars." he said "The boy's lost his grip I guess."

Scott stomped crossly over to the pool and he dipped himself in it to wash the mud off. He splashed water over himself and washed the mud off, staining the water brown in the process.

"OK now this course is getting ridiculous!" muttered Scott as he wiped his fur clean "These monkey bars are slippery as heck! How can anyone go across them without falling off?"

After wiping himself clean, he ran back over to the monkey bars and he avoided them this time. Mr. Staffer didn't do anything about as he just assumed Scott couldn't do the monkey bars and was just avoiding them to avoid getting muddy again. He'd have to train Scott up a lot more after this course it seemed. Scott ran on to the next obstacle, puffing slightly as he did so. The next obstacle was the tightrope which was stretched across a water puddle. Scott jumped onto the tightrope and he began to walk slowly across it while keeping his balance. But since Ravage had sawed it, it snapped and he fell into the water puddle underneath it with a splash. Ravage snickered at him whereas Jessica, Taran and Felix immediately realized something was wrong here.

"Hey, the tightrope just snapped!" yelled Taran "Was that supposed to happen?"

"I do not think it was my friend." said Felix "I guess the tightrope was old from constant use and the commanders did not take it upon themselves to immediately replace the old tightrope with a new one."

"In all honesty, I have been meaning to get the tightrope replaced." said Mr. Staffer admittedly "I've just been too busy to fix it what with you new recruits and everything so this gaff off Scott's is my fault. Sorry mates."

"It's OK, sir." said Jessica "We understand how busy you Royal Fighters can get."

Mr. Staffer nodded agreeably. As for Scott he picked himself up and glared at the snapped tightrope. His fists began to glow green with rage. He had hurt himself a good few times already and now he'd gotten himself wet, splattered with mud and then wet again. What more was going to go wrong for him?

"Looks like they needed to replace that old tightrope." muttered Scott "I'll let that one slide as the probably didn't have time to fix it. I hope nothing else is going to go wrong for me, I've had enough of these epic fails already."

He shook himself dry and ran onto the last obstacle. The swinging apparatus. Scott liked swinging; he did plenty of it back in Adabat so he was going to enjoy this. Scott got up onto the step, grabbed the first chain and he swung from it. But the chains had been greased like the monkey bars by Ravage so he slipped off the chain and landed painfully on his bottom. Scott pulled a funny face and he tried not to scream in pain. He picked himself up and rubbed himself tenderly. Ravage laughed at him once again, earning a glare each from Jessica, Taran and Felix who didn't think it was funny this time around.

"Oy! Stop laughing you heartless brute!" they yelled at him.

"Well excuse me for the fact Scott is giving us a comedy show you humourless fools!" snapped Ravage "Can I help it if it's funny?"

"Well you could try and contain yourself next time Ravage." said Felix.

Ravage snorted at the peacock and he turned his attention back to Scott. The lynx was going to try again at the swinging obstacle. But just like before, he slipped off the chain and hurt his bottom again. Scott growled angrily to himself and he tried a third time. Yet again, he fell off the chain and hurt himself once again due to how slippery the chain was thanks to Ravage greasing it. Scott fumed at the apparatus and decided to just leave it as he just couldn't grab it. He jogged off past the apparatus and headed for the finish line. He ran

as hard as he could until he reached the finish line. He threw himself down on the ground, panting and gasping from all the running and hurting himself he did on the obstacle course. Jessica looked at him pityingly and she clasped her hands together near her chest. Ravage finally managed to contain himself and he just sneered at Scott. The lynx looked terrible in all honesty. He had a nasty cut on his leg, his fur was all ruffled and messy from constantly shaking it dry, his nose was bright red and his shorts had a tiny hole in them. The lynx felt like a total fool and he felt more embarrassed then ever before.

"Well, well Scotty, you look worse for wear don't you?" chortled Ravage "And here's me thinking you'd actually make it."

"Shut up Ravage!" snapped Scott "I don't need your crud on me after what I've just been through!"

Mr. Staffer strode up to Scott and the lynx stood to attention as the weasel came up to him. Mr. Staffer didn't look like he had anything good to say so the lynx began to feel nervous.

"Um…how did I do sir?" asked Scott.

"Well your string of accidents suggests you are not fit enough for this course." said Mr. Staffer quietly; trying to make sure he didn't sound to angry or critical of Scott's performance "I thought I'd set the course up to your level but it appears I thought too highly of you. So sorry lad."

"You should be sorry!" yelled Scott angrily, energy fizzling around his hands "You made this course too hard for not only me but for anybody doing this stinking course! Those hurdles are too high and the swinging stuff is slippery and impossible to grab hold of! What were you thinking when you built that course?"

"How dare you speak to me like that!" snapped Mr. Staffer "This obstacle course is just fine, hundreds of new recruits have used it and not one of them has had accidents like you have! Don't you judge the course by its equipment, it's not the equipment that's wrong, it's your fitness that needs toning up!"

"I'm plenty fit enough!" retorted Scott "The course is poorly set up and you need to give it a re-build because it's impossible for anybody to do!"

"Stop blaming your failure on the course young man!" yelled Mr. Staffer "Just because you failed at it, it doesn't mean you get to yell at the commanders for it! Now stand down and be quiet until the next exercise!"

"I will not!" yelled Scott, his hands glowing green with energy, making him look like he was going to use his powers on Mr. Staffer "I have every right to criticize the course and I say it needs some seeing to because it's too hard for even the most advanced people to do! I wish you idiots could see that and stop being so big-headed about all this!"

Mr. Staffer's face turned redder then a ripe bell pepper.

"That's it! You've popped your goose sonny!" bellowed Mr. Staffer, prodding Scott sharply in the chest "You are relieved of your position in the R.F.S. and you are going back to Adabat first thing tomorrow you stubborn, hot-headed little boy! I warned you we don't approve of hot-heads here but you didn't listen to me and now you've cost your chance to become a Royal Fighter!"

Scott looked like he'd just been shot through the heart. His hands stopped glowing and his ears drooped down sadly.

"What? No! Please, don't kick me out sir!" begged Scott "I've been dying to join the R.F.S. ever since you formed, please don't kick me out! I'll do anything to make up for this sir! Please! I…"

"Get out of my sight already!" snapped Mr. Staffer sharply "Go to your quarters and stay there until evening now!"

"But sir…" began Scott.

"Scott, please just go already!" cried Jessica "You've dug yourself in a hole too big to get out of, don't dig yourself any deeper!"

Scott took Jessica's advice and he decided to stop the arguing and admit defeat. He stared down at the ground, his ears drooping down

behind his head and tears forming in his eyes.

"OK." said Scott glumly "I'll go. Sorry sir." he said to Mr. Staffer.

Mr. Staffer just scowled crossly at Scott.

"I'll get my best pilot to fly you off back to Adabat first thing tomorrow." he said to the heartbroken lynx "Such a shame too. You had great potential but you've wasted it. You've only got yourself to blame for this son."

"Yes sir." said Scott "Bye sir."

He slunk away from the obstacle course, unable to hold in the tears he fought hard to hold in. He began to sob to himself as he headed for the bunkers, the place the soldiers all went to at bedtime or for a timeout. Jessica couldn't help but feel sorry for her boyfriend. He'd been desperate to become a Royal Fighter and now he'd just ruined his chances at becoming one. She could just imagine how heartbroken the lynx was right now. Even Taran and Felix exchanged pitying glances to each other.

"Poor Scotty." said Taran "He really wanted to join the R.F.S didn't he?"

"He did indeed." said Felix "And now he's going to be escorted in shame back to dear old Adabat. What a sin this must be for him. And what a sin it must be for poor Jessica as she'll be separated from her boyfriend for a while."

"I know." said Jessica sadly "I'm sure going to miss Scott. When we've completed our training, the first thing I'm going to do is meet up with him. Just a pity we'll be doing heroic deeds without him."

"And what an unfortunate turn of events it is for us that the Adabat Royal Fighters is already a member short and we aren't even on the battlefield yet." said Felix "I guess Ravage is going to be our replacement as he's joined the R.F.S. and he's from Adabat too."

"I'm not going to enjoy his company." muttered Jessica "Even if he has changed sides. He's scary and he's unpleasant. I'm so not looking forward to having to fight crime with him on our side."

"OK mates, who wants a go at the obstacle course next?" asked Mr. Staffer.

"I'll go." said Taran eagerly "I'll show everybody how it's done."

With that said, Taran ran over to the start line and prepared to go. As for Ravage Bloodfang, the wolf had turned his back on everybody and was thinking to himself.

I hadn't anticipated this to happen. he thought in his head *Getting Scott banned from the R.F.S. was definitely a surprising yet pleasing motion of mine. Well that just means the boy will be easy prey for me as he hasn't got his stupid girlfriend around to help him. Unfortunately, I don't think it'll take long for anybody to find out I'm the cause of Scott's exclusion so I'd best make my move now before it's too late. I have no idea where the R.F.S keeps their weapons but I know somebody who will…*

He looked at the trainees and grinned a eerie little grin at them while they weren't looking.

Jessica will be too much of a handful so I'll kidnap the other two as they won't see me coming. thought Ravage gleefully *Then I'll force them to show me the weapons storage and I'll just help myself to something that can cause the end of a country. Adabat will see it's last sunset tonight!*

The beautiful image of Adabat's destruction flashed in Ravage's head like a PowerPoint presentation. This plan of his couldn't fail and he was going to lay siege to Adabat once and for all…

The rest of the day had just been easy exercise for the others. Jessica, Taran and Felix all ended up sharing Scott's string of epic fails on the obstacle course thanks to Ravage's alterations but unlike Scott, they didn't argue about it as they didn't want to be evicted from the service too. Mr. Staffer and Gerald had noticed the course did seem a bit iffy so they decided to give it an inspection later as it seemed odd for four different people all fail at the course at once. After the course, everybody did a hearty jog that went on for ten

miles and they all excelled well at that. All the while, Ravage had been lying in wait for his victim, waiting to carry out his plan. It was beginning to get dark now so the recruits all filed in to the cafeteria for dinner time. So did Scott as despite being kicked out of the service, he was still here since he wasn't leaving till morning so he needed something to eat too. As everybody filed into the cafeteria, Ravage hid behind a corner and waited for the right person to nab. He watched as Scott and Jessica went into the cafeteria. Felix was at the back of the queue so Ravage decided to grab him first. As Taran went into the cafeteria, Ravage leaped out from his corner and he grabbed Felix by the neck. The peacock squawked a terrible, frightened squawk as he was pulled into Ravage's corner.

"What is the meaning of this! Unhand me villain!" yelled Felix angrily, squirming in the grasp of his kidnapper.

His angry expression quickly changed into surprise and fear as he found out who it was that had grabbed him. He stared straight into Ravage's cold, yellow eyes.

"Ravage Bloodfang?" blurted Felix fearfully.

"Hello little peacock." purred Ravage "You've got a little change in management right now."

The peacock gulped as Ravage clamped his beak shut and carried him off to the warehouse. Felix was very frightened. He had no idea what the wolf wanted him for but it was bound to be something bad. Something very, very bad indeed...

Footnotes:

***See Arc 4**

**** See *STH Heroes of Mobius* Story 13**

Oh boy! This doesn't look good! What's Ravage planning to do with Felix? I bet you can guess! Tune in next time for a Royal

Scandal at the Royal Fighters Service! Reviews are much appreciated

New Recruits 3

Arc 9: New Recruits

Takes place during Stories 76-78 in Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius

Part 3: Royal Scandal

The Downunda Royal Fighter Camp was packing up for the night and the trainees and commanders were in the cafeteria having dinner. That was a good sign for Adabat traitor and villainous fiend Ravage Bloodfang as nobody would be bothering him right now. He had kidnapped Royal Fighter trainee Felix the Peacock, an Adabat resident and sophisticated speaker and taken him into a storage warehouse so that he and the terrified peacock could have a "private" conversation without anyone disturbing them. Ravage found a pile of rope on a shelf and he tied Felix up with it. He even tied a rope around Felix's beak in order to prevent him from squawking for help. The peacock struggled in his ties but Ravage had been very thorough with the ropes. The knots were triple knotted and the rope was thicker then a human fist. Not even Owen Pounder from Team Diamond would be able to break free from rope like that. The peacock tried to squawk but Ravage had been just as thorough on the rope around his beak as with the rope around his body. He couldn't make a noise at all, not even a whimper. Felix began to shake more then a frightened chicken. He shook so much he looked like his tail feathers were going to fall out all at once. His face rained with sweat. It was quite clear he was scared to death now. Well, I bet you'd be scared if a wolf in a skull mask and a cape had just nabbed you and tied YOU up with rope wouldn't you? The peacock could do nothing but sit on the floor and stare up at Ravage worriedly. What was the wolf going to do to him? Torture him? Kill him? Blackmail him? He would soon find out as Ravage flashed his sparkling white teeth at the peacock and he bent down to his height. Felix swallowed a huge lump in his throat in fear.

"So sorry for the unexpected surprise peacock but there was no

other way to get you to come quietly." purred Ravage, putting a clawed hand on Felix's head and stroking it in an uncomforting manner that made Felix shudder as if Ravage had placed an ice cube on his head "And I can't guarantee you'll be willing to stay so I needed to tie you down to make sure you stay here as you can see."

Felix nodded while mumbling through his tied up beak. He stared fearfully into Ravage's evil yellow eyes.

"So do you want to know why you're here then feather butt?" asked Ravage darkly, jamming his frightening face into Felix's face.

Felix shook his head; he really didn't want to know why he was here right now. Regardless, Ravage told him anyway.

"Sod it, I'll tell you anyway." snorted Ravage "I have a particularly evil plan tucked away in my ever glorious brain and I'm carrying it out tonight."

Felix just pulled a confused face at Ravage. The wolf scowled at Felix and continued to speak.

"This plan of mine involves the destruction of our dear home country and you, you marvellous bird, are going to be a part of it!" announced Ravage.

Felix's eyes widened in alarm and he tried to exclaim something but the rope around his beak prevented him from doing so.

"I think I know what you're trying to say peacock." said Ravage with a dry smile on his face ""You're going to destroy Adabat?" Yes, that is exactly what I am going to do! Purge Adabat with fire and make it pay for giving me these when I was only trying to bring peace to the world!"

He removed his skull mask and showed Felix his hideous scars. The peacock was alarmed to say the least to see such scars all over his face. Ravage put his mask back on and continued to give Felix some exposition.

"I tried to use a legendary weapon to bring peace to Mobius but the Royals of Adabat were too caught up in their silly little law and they

punished me for using it as it was a forbidden weapon." he growled "How foolish they are and they'll pay for it! I'm going to destroy Adabat and joining the R.F.S. has given me an opportunity so brilliant, you could look it up in the dictionary and find it under the word "brilliant". Do you know what I mean?"

Felix shook his head. The wolf was making no sense to him right now.

"I am going to steal a weapon from this camp and then use it to destroy Adabat." explained Ravage "Armies have lots of good weapons so this camp will likely have a good weapon to use. Do you know where the weapons are kept?"

Felix nodded. He'd been given a tour of the camp a few days ago so he knew where the weapons for the Royal Fighters were kept.

"Marvellous, so I didn't kidnap you for nothing!" cheered Ravage "You are going to show me where the weapons are kept and once you've done so, I'll just help myself to something that looks deadly enough. If you don't comply to my whims then I'm afraid I'm going to have to kill you."

He grabbed Felix by the neck and he made the peacock gag.

"I can imagine that silly little neck of yours will snap rather easily." growled Ravage "And in several different places too so I can make a shape with it as I break it! Unless of course, you want to help me in this plot?"

Felix looked down at the floor and closed his eyes. He nodded weakly, clearly not happy at the decision he was forced to make. Ravage let go of Felix and he grinned wider then a cunning little fox that's just come up with a sly and cunning plan.

"Thank you very much you puny little bird of many feathers!" cried Ravage "I'll remember to give you my gratitude once Adabat is wiped off the map! However, I have a nasty little feeling in my bones that you're going to try and betray me so I'm going to have to do something to ensure total loyalty to me peacock."

He walked over to a shelf and pulled down a box marked with the word "detonators". They were spares that would be taken out if needed. Ravage cut Felix loose of his ropes, then he took out a detonator, got a strand of duct tape from another shelf, put duct tape on the detonator, stuck his hand up the back of Felix's shirt and tapped the detonator to Felix's back. Ravage also fished out a remote device from the box of detonators. The remote was for the detonator of course and once Ravage pressed the button, Felix would end up becoming a peacock firework. Ravage removed the rope from Felix's beak and gave him a cold, eerie wolf stare that wolves were famous for.

"Dare try anything and you will go kaboom." snarled Ravage "I have the remote and if you dare try to remove it or get someone else to remove it, I'll set it off. If you do as you're told and follow my lead then I won't have to waste you will I?"

"Certainly not Ravage." said Felix sadly "I cannot believe we were gullible enough to fall for your crafty and well-worded little act. You have not changed at all, you are just as evil as Scott and Jessica describe you as."

"I know and I don't give a wolf's howl about it." sneered Ravage "Now, let's get weapons collecting shall we?"

"If you insist oh dark, crafty and sly creature of villainous nature." said Felix reluctantly.

"A simple "Yes Ravage" would have sufficed." muttered Ravage "You're a bit of a talker aren't you?"

"Yes, I am a bit overly verbose when it comes to verbal communication." admitted Felix "But I shall strive to be silent on this mission if you wish to avoid being irked by me Ravage." he said, seeing that Ravage was probably not keen on his overly verbose and sophisticated manner of speech.

"You may as quiet as you like." said Ravage "It's the only way you'll stay alive. Now let's go."

Ravage and Felix crept quietly out of the warehouse and Felix led

Ravage over to the main building on the camp. This was going to be the worst night of Felix's life and the best night of Ravage's life once this heist commenced.

After dinner, Scott sat in his bedroom and slumped on his bed miserably. He hadn't really enjoyed his meal due to how miserable he was and he didn't even join his friends for desert. He just left the cafeteria and retreated to his quarters. Never in his life had Scott been so ashamed of anything. He had been so looking forward to becoming a Royal Fighter and because of his angry outburst, he cost his chance to become a Royal Fighter and tomorrow morning, he was going to be flown back to Adabat, no second thoughts, no hesitations, zip. Just straight back to Adabat as if he was never in the service to begin with. Just thinking about being whisked back to Adabat, separated from his brother and girlfriend made Scott want to break down again. He wiped away a sneaky tear and he sniffed quietly.

"I am such a fool." he muttered to himself "If only I could keep this blasted temper under control and maybe I wouldn't get into trouble so much. My temper's cost me my one chance at a dream come true and now I'm going to be separated from my brother and my girlfriend. I'm gonna be so lonely back in Adabat as I have no one else to in the country. Oh if only I'd just kept my mouth shut and I wouldn't have brought this upon myself!" he whined, tugging his ears angrily "Heck, if I never joined the R.F.S. then none of this would have happened!"

He thumped the mattress angrily and he sat up on the bed, his head staring squarely down at his sandaled feet. He was just about to beat himself up even further until someone knocked on his door. His ears pricked up and he lifted his head up.

"Hello? Scott? May I please come in?" asked the voice of none other then his beach beauty of a girlfriend Jessica Cougar.

"Yes babe." said Scott "I need your company right now."

Jessica stepped into Scott's room and closed the door behind her.

She sat down on the bed beside Scott and looked at him. The lynx looked like he was suffering from mental depression right now.

"Are you alright?" asked Jessica.

"What is there to be alright about?" muttered Scott, not facing his girlfriend right now "I've been kicked out of the R.F.S and I'm going to be flown back to Adabat in disgrace and all because I couldn't keep my temper under control! Why am I such a numbskull?"

"You're not a numbskull Scott." said Jessica affectionately, putting her hand on his back and tenderly stroking it "You just, have a temper problem. Everybody has problems and they can't help themselves when it comes to them. You unfortunately have a temper problem and you need to work on keeping it under control."

"You can say that again." muttered Scott "If I knew how to control myself, I wouldn't be going through this now would I? It's amazing you still like me despite my hot-headed nature Jessica."

"That hot-headedness of yours has a certain charm baby." said Jessica softly "And your temper will never be great enough to hide your true nature Scott. I'll always love you no matter what you're like."

"You're such a charmer aren't you love?" said Scott with a fake grin on his face "No wonder I fell for you at such a young age."

"Yeah, we were only six year olds when we met each other and yet we're still together now." said Jessica as she looked back on some old memories that came to her head "Pity we'll be separated when you go back to Adabat."

"I'm gonna miss you Jessica." said Scott, holding Jessica's hand tenderly and looking sadly into her eyes "My life won't be the same without you."

"I'm gonna miss you too Scott." said Jessica "But don't worry, we'll still see each other. Once we complete our training, the first thing I'm going to do is visit you and give you the updates on my status. Maybe when the Adabat Royal Fighters go into action, we could

employ you as a little helper of some sorts so you can still help us save the world from evil. Just a shame we won't see each other full time like we used too."

"I know and that's what I'm gonna miss more then anything." said Scott "Your beautiful eyes and beautiful body were always a great sight for me. Much greater then even Mount Adabat back home."

Jessica blushed scarlet. She loved it when Scott said such charming remarks.

"Thank you." said Jessica "And I'm gonna miss your handsome little face Scott. Do you want a farewell kiss goodbye?"

"I'm not going yet but yes anyway." said Scott.

He wrapped his arms around Jessica's waist and pulled her close to himself. Jessica wrapped her arms around Scott's shoulders and she pulled his head towards hers. Their lips locked with each other and they kissed each other in a deep, tender, loving manner. They stroked each other's hair as they hugged and kissed each other lovingly. It was a really cute sight for any hopeless romantic to enjoy. This lovely, tender moment of theirs lasted a full minute before they broke up the kiss in order to give each other a breather. They still stared into each other's eyes deeply as if they couldn't divert their attention at all.

"I'll see you once my training's complete Scott." said Jessica softly.

"I'll see you then as well." said Scott "Good luck in your training hot stuff."

"Thank you." said Jessica "I'll tell Felix and Taran you'll miss them."

She got up from the bed and left the room, leaving Scott alone to lie on his bed and sulk to himself. He stared up at the ceiling and he sighed heavily. Tomorrow morning was going to be a morning Scott was going to hate and a morning he'd forever wish had never happened. Adabat was not going to be the same without Jessica beside him. At least he wouldn't deal with Ravage anymore as he was now a Royal Fighter. Only…he wasn't and he was plotting

something right now…

As for Jessica, she went down to Taran's room to see how the broad and stocky lynx was doing right now. She knocked on his door and waited for an answer.

"Who is it?" asked Taran.

"It's me Taran." said Jessica "Can I come in?"

"You sure can." said Taran.

Jessica opened the door and let herself in. Taran was pretty much doing the same thing Scott was doing, moping on his bed. He was lying on his back with his legs up against the wall as if he was sitting against it. The lynx was clearly as sad about Scott's banishment from the R.F.S as Jessica was. Taran and Scott are brothers after all and they hadn't seen each other in six years so to say goodbye to his brother so shortly after re-uniting with him was too much for Taran to handle.

"I guess you're not too happy about Scott's banishment." said Jessica softly.

"I'm not Jessie." said Taran gloomily "Me and Scott were best of friends growing up and six years ago, he left me due to the fact he couldn't stand people ridiculing his powers. I could easily have come with him but I liked my old home too much so I stayed. I've finally gotten to see him again and now in the blink of an eye, we're separated again. I honestly think Mr. Staffer was being too hard on my little bro."

"Maybe he was but it's not our place to question the commander's orders." said Jessica softly "Scott should have kept his temper under control really and he could have avoided this."

"Temper or not, I think he was right to complain about the obstacle course." said Taran as looked at his bruised arms "We all had the same problems he did. We tripped over the hurdles, slipped into the pool, slipped off the monkey bars and slipped off the swinging

apparatus. Either the course was too advanced for us or someone rigged it."

"That's way Mr. Staffer and Gerald are seeing to it." said Jessica "Although even if Scott was right about the course being too difficult, it won't change the fact he has to go."

"That is a big bummer." muttered Taran "The Adabat Royal Fighters are gonna be one fighter short before it even goes into service. That's a good start for us!"

"I know." said Jessica sadly "It really isn't a good start for us at all. By the way, have you seen Felix?" she suddenly asked "I wanna see him next."

"Nope, not since he mysteriously vanished before dinner." said Taran, sitting up properly on the bed "Where has that peacock gone?"

"I dunno." said Jessica "He didn't show up at dinner and he hasn't been seen since then. I hope he hasn't gotten himself lost or something."

"I'm hoping he's not hanging around with that creepy-ass wolf Ravage Bloodfang." muttered Taran crossly "As much as he says he's willing to redeem himself, I don't trust him. Especially hearing what Scotty's told me. He sounds like a real nasty guy."

"He is Taran and I should know because me and Scott have been in long combat with each other." said Jessica "I don't believe for a minute he wishes to redeem himself and my suspicions seem to be correct. He didn't show up at either mealtimes today and he's nowhere around here right now. Seems a little shifty for someone who wants to be a Royal Fighter."

"Maybe we should look for him and Felix and see if we can find out what's going on." suggested Taran "If Ravage is up to something villainous then I'll happily deck him on my brother's behalf!" he declared, punching his left palm with his right fist.

"I'm sure Scott will love that." said Jessica with a smile on her face

"OK then, I'll look for Felix, you look for Ravage and please for the love of Adabat be careful. Ravage is extremely dangerous and I don't want to have to tell Scott that he'll never see his own brother again."

"I'll be fine Jessie." boasted Taran "I may not have energy powers like you and Scotty but I have strength to make up for it!"

"I'm sure you do." said Jessica bluntly "Come on then, let's find Felix and Ravage then."

"Yes Jessie." said Taran eagerly as he got up from his bed and followed Jessica out of his room "Good thing Ravage isn't exactly subtle in his appearance. I mean that cape and skull mask makes him stick out like a man standing in the middle of the sea with a bright yellow flag on his head."

"Yes, Ravage is quite easy to recognize due to his unusual appearance, you'll find him easily." said Jessica "Just remember to be careful when you see him. Who knows what he'll do if he feels like he's being spied on."

Taran and Jessica both separated and they went up the corridor in different directions. Jessica went left and Taran went right. The two were off to find Felix and Ravage and find out the reason for their disappearances. Jessica had a bad feeling in her gut that Ravage was up to something sinister and it was only a matter of time until he unleashed his plan. And that plan was going to be something terrible, she just knew it…

Meanwhile, Ravage and Felix were creeping quietly around the dark and empty army camp with Felix leading the way. All the soldiers had retreated to their quarters for a goodnight's sleep and Mr. Staffer and Gerald were in their quarters discussing something so nobody would see them out and about right now. The night guards would be out on patrol in a minute but not even they would be a match for Ravage and Felix. Felix led Ravage to a huge semi-circled steel building that was a duller grey then the others and its doors were marked with the words "No unauthorized access beyond this

point". There were shining lights above the door that helped anybody around at night see the building. Ravage looked at the building as Felix tired to open the door. The door was chained shut with heavy chains and a padlock. For extra security reasons, it was also bolted too and the bolts were padlocked so nobody could move them. Ravage could easily see that this building they were at now was the one he was looking for since there were so many locks on it.

"Judging by the number of locks, I'd see this is the weapons storage." said Ravage.

"Correct you are oh fiendish one." said Felix as he pulled on the chains and tried to break them apart "This is the building where all of the army's weapons are stored and kept when not in use. I haven't set foot in this place myself so I have no idea what to expect in here."

He pulled on the chains but the chains were too thick and Felix wasn't physically strong like Taran and Ravage were so the peacock was having a hard time breaking them. He began to rattle them furiously as he tried to break them apart. Ravage clutched his ears as the rattling rang obnoxiously down them and he pushed Felix roughly away to stop the noise.

"Stop rattling the darn thing, you'll catch some attention you feeble brained feather duster!" snarled Ravage through clenched teeth.

"Apologies Ravage." said Felix quietly.

"Now, stop sitting around looking stupid and watch!" hissed Ravage "This is how you break into a building!"

He raised his fearsome claws and he aimed them at the padlock and chain that was keeping the door shut. He slashed the chains with his claws and due to how sharp they were, he sliced them all into pieces. The chains fell to the floor in pieces and the padlock fell with a clunk onto the floor, useless and broken thanks to Ravage. Ravage then saw to the padlocks on the bolts that were keeping the door shut. He sliced the padlocks in two with his claws and the padlock halves fell onto the ground with a silent thud. Ravage then

proceeded to pull the bolts to the other left, opening the bolts and unlocking the door. Ravage opened the door and he crept inside with Felix scuttling in after him. Ravage closed the door and turned the light on so they could see what they were doing in the building.

"OK, we're in." said Ravage "Start looking for the weapons storage."

With that said, Felix ran down the corridor and looked for any possible door that could lead to anything. It didn't take him long to find something for as he ran down to the end of the corridor, he saw a huge steel and titanium door marked with warning stripes around the corners and a keypad was positioned next to the door. It was obvious something of great importance was behind this door. The only catch was, Felix had no idea what the code was so he had no idea how to get in.

"Ravage, I think I have found were the weapons are stored." Felix called over to Ravage.

"That was quick." said Ravage with a sly grin on his face as he wandered down to were Felix was "Open it for me if you please."

"I would do so without a moment of hesitance if the door wasn't coded." said Felix, pointing at the keypad "I was not informed on the code to this door so I am unable to be of any help in this imperative situation Ravage."

Ravage muttered some curse words under his breath and he observed the keypad. The keypad was a small silver calculator sized pad that had numbers and all the letters to the alphabet on them. The code could be anything and Ravage had no idea what the code could possibly be.

"I should have planned in advance on this." muttered Ravage crossly "Of course the door was going to be coded you dumbo!"

"So how do you plan to get into the room then?" asked Felix "Maybe you could use the detonator on my back to blow the door down?"

"You must think I've won the noble prize for World's Biggest Dunce if I'm going to do something as bone-headed as that!" snapped

Ravage "The detonator is too messy and if I use your detonator, I won't be able to keep you under control! We must do this operation nice and cleanly and the only way to do it as either use the code to open the door or we could do this…"

He drew his arm back and plunged it into the keypad. He proceeded to rip the entire keypad clean out of the wall as if it was merely a fishbone being ripped out of a fish. The circuitry behind the pad sparkled wildly in the wall after the keypad was torn out and Ravage tossed the thing onto the floor. Felix stared at Ravage.

"How in anyway is a motion of that nature doing this cleanly?" he demanded.

"Oh shut up feather head, at least we'll be able to open the door now!" snapped Ravage "The keypad's code is useless since there is no keypad, henceforth, we can open it and stroll right into the place!"

Ravage was too right on that one. Since the keypad had been torn from the wall, the code didn't apply to the door and Ravage was able to just open it like any normal door. He grabbed one side of the door and pushed it to the side. It was hard, heavy work due to the sheer weight and bulk of the door but he managed it. Felix helped him out by pushing the other side of the door to one side. Despite his not-so-great strength, he managed to push the heavy door to the side. The door was now open and Ravage and Felix were free to go inside the room. The sight they were met with when they walked into the room was astonishing with a capital A. The room was packed to the ceiling with weapons! There were weapons all of kinds in the room. Big weapons, small weapons, projectile weapons, handheld weapons, lethal weapons, sharp weapons, heavy weapons, light weapons, weapons galore and pretty much weapons of any kind! Never before had Ravage seen so many weapons before and even Felix was surprised to see so many weapons as he had never been in this room before.

"Do the Royal Fighters really acquire the need of so many weapons?" asked Felix "There are enough weapons here to arm the entire population of Mobius!"

"Why ever these foolish Royal Fighters need so many weapons I'll

never know." said Ravage "But at least I've got a wide selection so I can just keep coming back for more if the weapons I pick don't work to my intentions! Now, you keep a look out Felix and make sure nobody gets in here while I go looting around the weapons. Don't try anything funny because I've still got the remote to activate your bomb Capisce?"

"Understood sir." said Felix glumly "I shall keep out anyone who comes in here and spots us snooping about in here."

Felix stood at the door and he kept his beady eyes open for anyone coming into the building or anyone trying to snitch on him and Ravage. The likelihood of being found out was slim at the moment but that didn't mean they wouldn't get found out and since Felix had a detonator tapped to his back that Ravage could set off at any moment, he had to make sure that nobody did find out what was going on in the weapon's storage room or Ravage would kill him. As for Ravage, he began staring at the shelves of weapons, some on display and some in boxes, and he couldn't believe the sheer selection there was in the room. He had never expected the room to have so many weapons stored in it and he was a little spoiled for choice. He wanted some kind of bomb though as bombs were the best weapons to destroy a country with so he began looking around for the bombs. There were bound to be bombs of some kind in here.

"OK bombs, were are you kept then?" he purred to himself as he looked for them.

He prowled all around the room he was in, looking for a shelf that had bombs. Unfortunately for Ravage, Jessica Cougar was looking around the camp grounds for him and Felix and she saw a light shining through the building's door, which was slightly open and casting a long streak of light on the ground. Jessica had a suspicion on what could possibly be going on in that building so she crept over to it as silently as she could. She came up to the front door and stepped on something. She looked down and noticed the broken chains and padlocks lying at the foot of the door. The locks had been sliced in two and the chains were all in pieces. Jessica had a sneaky feeling that she was investigating a break in.

"There's a break in in progress!" she whispered to herself "I do hope

it's not Felix and Ravage doing this!"

The only way to find out the answer was to sneak into the building and see what was going on. She opened the door as quietly as possible and she let herself inside. The first thing she saw when entering the building was Felix the Peacock, standing guard in front of a room at the end of the corridor. Jessica's heart sank in despair. Felix WAS involved in this supposed break in! But what was he up to? And where was Ravage? Was he here with him? She had to find out and get to the bottom of this and fast.

"Felix." Jessica called over to the peacock as she wondered down the corridor towards him.

The nervous peacock almost leaped out of his feathers in fright at the mere sound of Jessica's voice.

"Eek! Jessica!" he blurted "How, how surprising it is to have your presence here right now." he said, trying to look innocent and trying to hide the fear in his voice.

"OK Felix, what is going on around here?" asked Jessica sternly with her hands on her hips and a steely glare in her eyes "What are you doing in here?"

Felix's brain whirred quickly for an answer.

"Um...me and Ravage have been requested to do a...weapons check by the commanders." he lied "Me and Ravage are merely surveying this very room and taking careful notes on the mass number of weapons this room has."

"I don't buy your act Felix." said Jessica coldly "If you're on a "weapons check" then why are all the locks outside broken and why is the keypad to that door lying on the floor when it should be in the wall?"

She pointed at the wrecked and useless keypad that lay on the floor not far from Felix. The peacock gulped. Jessica knew what he was up to! He had to get rid of her and fast!

"You and Ravage aren't stealing weapons from this building are

you?" asked Jessica, the look of horror in her eyes was perceptible to say the least.

"I apologise gravely for this act I am about to commence with, but I have no choice dear friend." said Felix, pulling a tail feather off his bottom and stiffening it into a club.

"What do you mean?" asked Jessica worriedly "Felix please, tell me what's happening."

Felix didn't answer her. Instead, he walloped Jessica around the head with the tail feather club and knocked her out cold. The cougar lay on the floor, eyes closed and completely motionless. Felix felt dreadful after doing that to his friend. But Ravage would blow him up if he didn't so he had no other option. As for Ravage, he had heard the commotion and he poked his head out of the room to see what Felix was doing.

"Oy, King of the Feathers, what's going on out here?" snarled Ravage fiercely.

"Jessica has found us and she knows what I'm up to." said Felix grimly "I've knocked her out though so she cannot inform anyone of what actions were commencing with right now."

Ravage shifted his steely gaze from Felix and straight at Jessica to see what he was talking about. He saw the unconscious body of Jessica, one of his primary enemies, lying on the floor with a small lump on her head from the knock on the head she received from Felix. Ravage grinned like a wicked wolf from a fairytale. It gave him great pleasure to see one of his most irritable enemies knocked out on the floor and unable to get in his way.

"Well Felix, I must commend you on this good piece of work." applauded Ravage "Well done. Now we must deal with the loathsome teen before she can come to."

"You are not going to rid her of her life are you?" asked Felix nervously.

"I suppose by that you meant "Am I going to kill her?" said Ravage

"Well if that's the case then I would love to kill her but if I do, you'll rebel against me and force me to blow you up and I still need you right now so I will not kill her. I will however lock her up in here once I've found the weapons I need."

"Lock her up in the weapons storage vault?" said Felix "How can you possibly commence with something like that if the keypad has been ripped off the wall? The keypad was the only thing keeping it locked."

"Correct Felix and I have a solution to this." purred Ravage "I am going to weld the door shut. I can remember seeing a welding tool in the warehouse I took you to. Be a good bird and get one for me will you? And remember to bring the mask too."

"At once oh villainous one." said Felix, quickly scuttling off down the corridor and to the door.

He ran through the door and ran off to the warehouse so he could get Ravage a welding tool. As for Ravage, he carried the unconscious Jessica into the weapons storage room and he lay her down at a shelf full of rifles. He was just about to continue looking for weapons when he realized something.

"Oh I am such a moron!" he groaned to himself "The brat will use any of the weapons here to blow her way out of this vault! I'm sure her energy powers won't get her anywhere but there's bound to be a detonator of some kind in here she can use! Oh well, I guess I'm going to have to confiscate every single bomb in the room."

With that said, he went on a mad search around for any kind of explosive weapon in the room. He didn't want Jessica to escape from the room once he welded it shut so he decided to get rid of all the bombs. That's when he suddenly had the idea to take ALL the bombs with him to Adabat and use them to lay siege to the country! He had no idea how powerful the bombs probably were but if he had plenty of bombs to use, he was certain to destroy the country. The only trouble was, Ravage didn't really have a way of carrying them all. He could stuff small things like grenades or detonators in his cloak pockets but he had no way of carrying the bigger bombs. He would have to find some way of carrying them and he would do so

once he finished getting rid of the bombs.

Meanwhile, Taran wasn't having much luck in finding Felix and Ravage. He had looked all over the camp but he didn't find anybody. He scratched his head in thought and he began to wonder where the peacock and wolf were.

"I've looked everywhere." he muttered to himself "And I haven't found anything. As conspicuous as Ravage is, he sure is a good hider. I'm not surprised I can't find Felix as he was always a good hider back in good old Adabat."

Coincidentally, just as he mentioned the name "Adabat" he heard the sound of Felix leaving the warehouse and running off somewhere. Taran couldn't quite see Felix due to how dark it was out here but he could hear the peacock's footsteps so he followed the sound and ran over to where it was. He came across a building with light streaking out on the ground due to the fact it was slightly open and he heard Felix heading to the building. Felix opened the door and let himself in. Taran just saw Felix's familiar shape, silhouetted by the light as he entered the building. He'd found the peacock at last.

"What is that bird doing out here at night?" he wondered "And what's he going in there for? That's a weapon's storage hut and it's a classified area according to Mr. Staffer! Is Felix trying to get himself kicked out just like my poor brother?"

He crept over to the building and he opened the door a crack. He saw Felix standing at the weapon vault's door and he was talking to Ravage, the wolf sticking his head out the door. Taran decided to eavesdrop on them and see if he could find out what was going on.

"I have brought you the welder and mask you dearly require Ravage." puffed Felix "How goes the raid right now?"

"I've decided to take all the bombs in the vault so Jessica will be unable to use one to escape from here once I weld the doors shut." Ravage informed the peacock "Not to mention, I don't have to waste

time looking for a particular bomb to use to destroy Adabat and I can just use them all."

"Give how many weapons there are I bet there'll be enough bombs in that vault to level a country." gulped Felix "And I've just realized something. What about the lynx brothers? What if they find out what you're up to and they try and stop you?"

"Scott's getting shipped back to Adabat tomorrow so he'll be too busy moping in his quarters." said Ravage "And his brother hasn't met me yet so he won't get suspicious about me, especially as I've fooled him and the others into thinking I'm here to redeem myself."

Taran couldn't believe his ears. Felix was a traitor and was helping Ravage Bloodfang destroy Adabat! Ravage hadn't changed at all and he'd somehow managed to get Felix to join him! He had to tell his brother immediately.

"Holy waterfalls!" Taran cried to himself "Scott was right, Ravage is evil and hell-bent on destroying Adabat! I've got to warn him and get him to stop Ravage immediately!"

He ran off as fast as his powerful legs would carry him. Just as he left, Felix left the weapons storage hut and ran off in search of a vehicle. Ravage had told him to find a vehicle he could use to carry all the weapons in as well as flee to Adabat in it. Felix knew where the vehicles were stored and parked so he flew off to a hangar bay at the other end of the camp to fetch Ravage a vehicle. The raid was going so well the peacock couldn't believe it. He just wished he wasn't part of it and that he was actually helping to stop Ravage, not helping Ravage reach his goal. He prayed that Scott or Taran would find out about this and help him get free of Ravage's wrath.

Meanwhile, Taran had run back to the soldier's quarters and he quickly searched for Scott's room. He found it and he burst into the room in a hurry. The lynx was lying on his bed fast asleep and off in dreamland. Taran really didn't want to wake Scott up as he knew what his brother was like when he was rudely awakened but this was an emergency, an emergency Scott would be too happy to

carry out. Taran shook Scott madly and woke the lynx up. Scott opened his eyes and he mumbled sleepily.

"Oh…Taran don't wake me up in the middle of the night!" he grumbled as he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes "You know I get cranky when I don't get my sleep!"

"Sorry Scott but I've got something terrible to tell you!" cried Taran "Ravage isn't trying to redeem himself at all! He's broken into a weapons storage hut and he's got Felix helping him!"

"Ravage has broken into what and he's got who helping him?" exclaimed Scott in surprise.

"Ravage is stealing bombs and he's going to use them to destroy Adabat and Felix is helping him!" exclaimed Taran "I should know, I heard it all with my own ears! And if that wasn't bad enough, he's got Jessica and is probably going to trap her in the vault!"

Scott immediately jumped up from his bed and summoned some energy to his hands. His face contorted with rage and he looked like he was ready to rip somebody's head off.

"OK! That's it!" he growled "Nobody locks up my girlfriend and nobody betrays us like this! Come on Taran, we've got a fiend and a traitor to stop!"

"I'm with you all the way bro." said Taran "And who knows? Maybe you can redeem yourself in Mr. Staffer's eyes if you can stop Ravage dead in his tracks."

"I didn't think of that but that's a nice thought." said Scott with a smirk on his face "Once I beat the tar outta Ravage and expose him as a fraud to Mr. Staffer, he'll take me back in and I'll be back in the service once again!"

"Let's hope so." said Taran.

With that said, the two lynxes ran straight out of the room and Taran led Scott to the weapons hut. Scott couldn't wait to soften his knuckles on Ravage's face right now…

Meanwhile, Ravage had finally finished looting the vault's bomb supply and he had them all stacked outside the vault. He was amazed at how many bombs he had managed to find in the vault. He had found twenty boxes full of detonators and twenty boxes full of grenades. There were about twenty bombs in each box so Ravage had a rich supply with him. He had even managed to find giant crates containing bombs the size of a daschund dog. He had five crates, each containing five bombs in them. These bombs were presumably for the heavy artillery rather then the soldiers so they could easily do some damage. The entire supply alone could probably level a country so Ravage decided when he got to Adabat, he would use the whole supply of giant bombs on Adabat and the country would end up at the bottom of the sea. Ravage had even managed to find a cardboard box containing several smaller bombs and mines of some kind. He wouldn't need so many bombs but this was to ensure Jessica couldn't use any of them to escape from the vault and try to stop him. Now Ravage had taken the whole bomb supply, he closed the doors and prepared to weld them together until Felix called him.

"Ravage, I have found a hover-car for you." he called over to the wolf.

"Thank you very much little peacock." muttered Ravage sarcastically "Now help me load the thing with all these bombs I've stolen."

Felix quickly ran into the hut and helped Ravage carry the bombs over to the hover-car he had stolen. The hover-car belonged to Gerald, Mr. Staffer's assistant, and it was a nice, sleek, green, army camouflage deco car that hovered above the ground much like the hover-car Mandy Mouse owned. Due to how much bombs Ravage had, he stuffed the large crates in the back seats and he stored the smaller bombs in the boot of the car. The five large crates were all sitting in the back seat and the detonators, grenades and other bombs were all stored neatly in the boot of the car. Ravage slammed the boot shut and he closed the back doors to the car.

"OK Felix, the raid is complete and we're ready to go to Adabat." announced Ravage "I've just got to weld the vault doors shut and trap Jessica in there and we can get going. Don't worry about the

lynx brothers sticking their noses in were they don't belong, Adabat will be destroyed by the time they get Jessica out."

"Yes Ravage." said Felix glumly, feeling incredibly ashamed at the fact he helped Ravage accomplish this raid.

But before anything else could happen, Scott and Taran leaped out of the shadows of the night and they pounced on Ravage and Felix. Scott pinned Felix down to the ground and summoned energy to his hands whereas Taran roundhouse punched Ravage directly in the face. The wolf was thrown off his feet and onto his back. He landed with a clunk against the hut. The wolf growled at Taran and he picked himself up. He bared his claws and teeth at the broad and stocky lynx that stood before him.

"What are you two lynxes doing here?" growled Ravage.

"We're here to stop you dead in your tracks Ravage!" yelled Taran "I spied on you and Felix and I found out what you're up to so I called Scotty boy over and now we're here to stop you wolf-boy!"

"Good, it means I get another lynx to chew on." muttered Ravage icily.

The two prepared to beat the tar out of each other as they circled one another nice and slowly. As for Scott, he prepared to deck Felix to kingdom come. He had his hand around Felix's throat and he had his other hand raised and glowing green, ready to punch him and knock some sense into him.

"You traitor!" yelled Scott "How dare you help that scum-bag Ravage steal some bombs so he can destroy Adabat, OUR home country with them! I'm gonna rip your feathers off for this!"

"No Scott wait!" cried Felix desperately "You misapprehend the situation here! I have no choice but to help Ravage! I swear I don't!"

"What do you mean you feathery scum?" demanded Scott fiercely, preparing to punch Felix's face in.

"He means he'll die unless he helpsme." informed Ravage.

He pulled out the remote to Felix's detonator and showed it to the lynxes. Scott and Taran both stared at the remote and wondered what it was.

"I have put a bomb on Felix's back." explained Ravage "If you two don't stand down and surrender yourselves then I'll set it off and Felix will end up littering the ground with more then just his feathers."

The lynxes did a double act of wild double takes and gasping in horror.

"Felix has a bomb on his back?" gasped Scott, quickly getting up off Felix and standing back. "That means…Felix isn't a traitor! You've blackmailed him you demon! Blackmailed him into helping you destroy your own country! How low can you stoop Ravage?"

"Lower then the deepest ocean on Mobius you energy-enhanced fool." sniffed Ravage "Now surrender or I'll blow you all up with Felix's detonator right now!"

Scott was torn between kicking Ravage's teeth in and letting Felix get blown up. As much as the lynx was willing to kill Ravage for his demonic monstrosity right now, he couldn't let Felix suffer for it. He knew that Jessica and Felix were good friends and the cougar would be heartbroken to hear that her friend had been blown up by Ravage. Scott had no choice but to stand down and let Ravage get away. His hands stopped glowing and the energy around them faded away. He sighed loudly and he looked down at his feet.

"We surrender." said Scott "But if you harm so much as one feather on Felix's head, I'll slug you on Jessica's behalf!"

"Yeah, your lips are moving but all I'm hearing is "I'm a total failure to heroism" boy." sneered Ravage "I'll be off to destroy Adabat now and you two can rot in that vault together with Jessica."

With that said, Felix pulled a tail feather out from his backside and he stiffened it. He clubbed the two lynxes over the heads each with the tail-feather and they both collapsed onto the ground side by side. They were unconscious and Ravage laughed at them both.

"Oh what marvellous fortune!" he cackled "My two dearest enemies are defeated and now I'm going to lock Scott and his brother up with Jessica so they cannot stop me! Adabat's destruction is certain now!"

He cackled demonically at his recent victory. Felix however, stared down at his feet in shame. Adabat was going to end up at the bottom of the ocean tonight and nobody would get to see the next morning and it would be all because of him being forced to help Ravage. He was a disgrace to the R.F.S. and they would not be happy to hear what had happened tonight with him and Ravage…

Boy this REALLY doesn't look good does it? Ravage has locked up his enemies and has a bomb supply that can easily level a country! What hope does Adabat have now? The answers lie in the earth-shaking finale next time! Don't miss it! Reviews are welcome as always.

New Recruits 4

Arc 9: New Recruits

Takes place during Stories 76-78 in Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius

Part 4: About To Go Up In Flames

Scott Lynx, resident of Adabat, had been out for quite a while after receiving that sharp knock on the head by Felix the Peacock, another resident of Adabat who had just been blackmailed into working for Ravage Bloodfang, the enemy of Adabat and soon-to-be destroyer of Adabat. During the time Scott had been out, he had been thrown into the weapons vault, which Ravage and Felix had broken into and raided, along with his girlfriend, Jessica Cougar, and his older brother, Taran the Lynx. In order to make sure they stay locked up, Ravage had welded the door shut using a welding tool. Escape from the vault now the door was welded shut was virtually impossible, especially since Ravage had stolen all of the bombs in the vault so they couldn't use them to blown the door down and escape. While they had been knocked out, Ravage and Felix fled the Downunda Royal Fighters campsite and were off to Adabat in a stolen hover-car. They had left about fifteen minutes ago and Adabat was a fifty minute drive-away from Downunda. Scott didn't know this yet as he was still unconscious from Felix's whack on the head. However, after what seemed like forever even though it was only an hour, the lynx finally started to come to. He twitched and he moaned sleepily.

"Ooooh…what did I just hit my head on?" he muttered to himself as he rubbed his throbbing head.

The first thing he was when he opened his eyes was the beautiful face of Jessica, the love of his life. She was kneeling beside him and waiting for him to wake up. She'd only just woken up ten minutes ago and was wondering why Scott and Taran were in here with her. Scott's eyes opened groggily and his face brightened.

"Jessica…?" he said weakly.

"Oh Scott, I'm so glad you're awake!" cried Jessica happily, throwing her arms around her boyfriend happily "I have something terrible to tell you!"

"Not more bad news." muttered Scott as he rubbed his scalp better "What's going on?"

"I don't really know but for some reason, Felix and Ravage have broken into this building and Felix knocked me out for some reason." explained Jessica, rubbing the bump on her head better "And then all of the sudden, I wake up in here and find you and Taran here too. I think Felix is working with Ravage on something."

Scott quickly realized why Jessica seemed to be in the dark on the whole situation. She'd been out of it all the time he and Taran had been on the case and Felix hadn't told her a thing, he just knocked her out and left her in here. Scott sat up straight and he put a hand on Jessica's shoulder.

"Felix is working with Ravage but not by choice." explained Scott "He's been blackmailed into working for that wolf scum."

"Blackmailed?" squealed Jessica in horror "Oh no! Poor Felix! What's that wolf doing to him?"

"He's strapped a bomb onto his back apparently." Scott informed her "Ravage has the remote and he'll set the bomb off if poor Felix doesn't help him destroy Adabat. That's why he and Ravage are here, Ravage is looking for weapons to destroy Adabat with and I think he's probably found one."

Jessica couldn't believe her ears. She never knew her arch-enemy could stoop lower then he already did but he did and now he was using one of her best-friends to help him obtain his demonic goal.

"Ravage is still trying to destroy Adabat!" shrieked Jessica "Then that means all this talk of him wanting to redeem himself was nothing more then a pretence! A ruse to trick Mr. Staffer into letting him into the service so he could steal some weapons and use them

for his own evil use!"

"Yes that's right babe." muttered Scott crossly "He had us all fooled. In fact, I'm willing to bet he's the reason I couldn't conquer that obstacle course earlier! I bet he sabotaged it and made it unusable to make me look like a fool which in turn got me kicked out of the service!"

"I'm starting to agree with you on that one because even we couldn't do the course." explained Jessica "We had the same problems you did and Mr. Staffer can't understand why so Ravage must have rigged it to make us all look stupid. But that's not important, we've got to get to Adabat and stop Ravage before he uses whatever weapon he's stolen from here to destroy the country!"

"I'm willing to bet he's already at Adabat now." grumbled Scott, getting up onto his feet "And he's probably getting ready to use that damn weapon as we speak! Speaking of weapons, I wonder what he's stolen. Some kind of bomb no doubt."

"Make that ALL the bombs." said Taran who had just woken up from his unconsciousness and had taken a look around the vault just to see what weapons Ravage had taken "The bomb shelves are completely empty and there's no other explosive weapon in here! He's taken them all! Including the mines!"

Scott and Jessica looked like they were both about to fall back into unconsciousness.

"He's taken EVERY SINGLE explosive weapon in the vault?" exclaimed Scott "That'll sink Adabat for sure! Now we've GOT to catch up to them!"

He quickly ran over to the door and he gripped the edges and he tried to slide it open. But because Ravage had welded the door shut, the door wouldn't budge. Scott pulled on it as hard as he could. He tried using all the strength in his body but the door wouldn't budge the slightest of inches. It wouldn't even budge so much as a millimetre. The door was impossible to open because of what Ravage had done to it.

"The door's stuck! It won't open!" cried Scott.

"That's impossible, the keypad was ripped out of the wall!" exclaimed Jessica "I saw it lying on the floor and that keypad keeps the door locked so how can it be stuck?"

"I dunno pretty-face but I have a theory." said Taran as he racked his brain for a memory "I saw Felix carrying a welding tool and he said he got it for Ravage. I'm guessing he welded the door shut."

"Well that bloody sucks!" muttered Scott, thumping the door angrily "How the flying monkey nuts can we get outta here if the door's been welded shut?"

"We're gonna have to bust the door down." suggested Jessica "We'll have to worry about paying for the damages later as we have no time right now. Ravage is bound to be on his way to Adabat with this vault's bomb supply!"

"It's a good thing we have energy powers Jessica." said Scott, summoning raw, concentrated energy to his hands which caused them to glow green "We'll bust out of this vault in a jiffy!"

With that said, Scott proceeded to punch the door with an energy enhanced punch. Jessica summoned energy to her hands and joined in with him. The two began to punch the door furiously with their energy enhanced punches. Taran just watched them, clearly envious of the fact they had powers and he didn't.

"Oh man, I wish I touched that darn Sceptre of Fates like they did." he muttered "I'd be able to join in with them if I had the same powers they have."

Scott and Jessica punched the door as hard as they could with the energy surrounding their fists making the punches harder. If this didn't get them out of the vault then nothing would…

Meanwhile, Ravage and Felix had finally arrived at the sunny country of Adabat. The whole country was sleeping peacefully right now due to the fact it was night time so there was going to be no

one about at this hour. The moon was shining brightly in the dark skies above and casting a glistening white reflection on the sea. It was so dark you couldn't even see Mount Adabat which was out to sea and was a good row away from the beaches. Ravage grinned evilly to himself. Adabat wouldn't wake up the next morning because when he'd finished at the end of the night, Adabat would be under the ocean after being excessively bombed by Ravage's amazing arsenal of bombs he'd swiped from the Downunda R.F.S. camp. Ravage got out of the car and he opened the boot. He pulled out two boxes of detonators and he gave one to Felix, who got out of the car and stood beside him. Ravage closed the boot and carried the box he had under his arm.

"OK Felix, before I sink this blasted country, I am going to blow up the village Scott and Jessica live in." explained Ravage "Think of it as a last minute get-back at them before I sink the whole place if you please."

"Yes Ravage." said Felix sadly, regretting the whole thing more then ever now "I know how much you abhor those two due to the exposition you've given me detailing how they get in your way and how they keep foiling your plans of turpitude on the way here."

"So you were paying attention to my earlier ranting peacock, how very nice." muttered Ravage "Now listen to me very carefully because I am only going to explain this once! Got me?"

"Your words are comprehended oh scandalous one." said Felix.

"Good." said Ravage "Set ONE detonator on each house and don't stop until the box is empty. Once we've finished, I'll set them off to go in sixty seconds so we'll have enough time to get out of the way of the blast. Think you can do this task feather boy?"

"I believe I am more then capable of carrying out this instruction of yours." said Felix.

"Very nice." said Ravage "If these two boxes aren't enough, I'll get another box. I can't fully remember how many buildings are in this village so I'll have to find out as I set these up. Each box of detonators I have has twenty detonators so if we use up all the

detonators in these two, we will have forty buildings set up and ready to blow. I just hope that's how many buildings there are and I don't have to go back for more."

"Well let's get started on this folly of yours." said Felix.

With that said, Ravage and Felix set off to place the detonators on all the houses in this village they had come across. Ravage wanted to do every house in the village be it a normal house or a stilt house as he wanted the whole village to burn to the ground. Even though it would have made more sense to just blow the country up and take the village with it, Ravage was a sadistic individual and he wanted to blow the village up just to upset Scott and Jessica, even though they weren't here to see this anyway. Regardless, Ravage was going to enjoy this as at long last, he was going to destroy Adabat and get his revenge on the country for banishing him for all the wrong reasons…

Back in the vault, Scott and Jessica were still punching the door with their energy enhanced fists. They had tried everything they could. Punches, kicks and firing energy spears at the welded door. But to their sheer bad luck, the door was too strong for even their energy powers. The door was built withstand even the strongest of rifles to prevent a break-in should one ever happen so Scott and Jessica's energy powers wouldn't get through it, especially as they weren't the strongest of powers out there. The door was so strong their powers weren't even denting it. After one final punch each, the Adabat heroes fell onto their knees panting and gasping. They were exhausted after trying and failing to break the door down. So exhausted, they felt like they wouldn't be able to so much as stand up. In fact, they were having trouble speaking due to how much they were panting.

"Gasp…huff…pant…" spluttered Scott tiredly "Our…powers… aren't…working…puff! The…door's…too…strong!"

"How…can…we…get…out….of…here…then…if…we…can't… bust…it…down?" wheezed Jessica.

"I have one idea that'll possibly work." said Taran, helping the two up onto their feet "I'll try blasting the door down. There's guns galore in here, one of them is bound to work."

"Somehow…I don't think…so…" puffed Jessica as she began to get her breath back "If our energy…powers…can't even dent…that…door then what…chance does a gun have?"

"There's only one way to find out, try them out of course." said Taran "Let's see what they've got."

Taran ran over to the gun shelves and stared admiringly at the shelves that were packed with guns of many shapes and sizes. Some were on display and some were in boxes. Taran scanned the shelves to see which weapon would be the best to use. Due to the door's strength and the fact it withstood raw concentrated energy, he looked for a particularly powerful and large gun. None of the rifles and firearms on display looked like they were up to the task though so he ignored them. He didn't even look at the handheld pistols and revolvers, they certainly wouldn't work. Then suddenly, he spotted something that looked like it was the perfect gun for this task. The weapon he saw was a laser cannon shaped and held like a handheld rotary cannon. The cannon was dark blue with a silver barrel that was as long as his lower arm. Taran immediately picked it up and beamed happily at it. He was always fond of the heavy weapons. After all, big boys love big toys as they say.

"Oh yeah! This thing's mine!" he chuckled to himself as he put the ammo cartridge inside it.

"Let's hope that thing will work on the door otherwise we'll never get out of here." said Scott "Fire away Taran."

"Right away Scotty boy." said Taran, priming the laser cannon and preparing to fire it.

He stood in front of the door and he aimed the cannon at it.

"Thank goodness this is a laser cannon so I don't have to worry about loud bangs." he said to himself, remembering how using muskets often hurt his ears due to the loud bang they made when

they fired. Taran had sensitive ears after all.

Taran pulled the trigger and the laser cannon fired a brilliant, yellow laser blast. The blast hit the door but it ricocheted straight off the door and hit the ceiling instead! Taran was so shocked at that turnout, he almost dropped the cannon onto the floor. Scott and Jessica were equally as amazed as he was. Neither of them could speak for a moment or two.

"H…huh…wha…ga…jib…jab…gob…wha…?" spluttered Taran "Well…bang the gamelans till they fall onto the floor! The door's resistant to laser blasts!"

"Well we ought to give props to Mr. Staffer for making a door that's impossible to break down." said Scott "Just a pity that if anyone wants to get out of it, we can't because it's too tough! We're gonna be stuck in here forever thanks to that scum Ravage Bloodfang! What I wouldn't give to kick his bleeding teeth in right now!"

"Um Scott, if this helps I have an idea." said Jessica quietly, fumbling with her hands.

"Y-you do?" asked Scott.

"Well that's not surprising, she's usually the one that comes up with the ideas Scotty." sneered Taran mockingly, rubbing his brother's hair roughly.

"Taran, cut it out!" chuckled Scott, playfully pushing him away "So gorgeous, what is your idea?" he said to Jessica.

"We can't get out through the door but we MIGHT be able to get out through the ROOF." said Jessica, pointing up at the ceiling above their heads "I bet the ceiling's not as strong as the door."

"I'm amazed I didn't consider that." muttered Scott, clouting himself on the head "I do wish I'd use my head more often."

"I just hope when Mr. Staffer sees all this, he won't get the wrong idea." said Taran grimly "I mean, the hole in the roof might suggest we've broken in here through the roof and the missing bombs will make him think we've stolen them."

"We'll clear everything up to him once we drag Ravage's ugly corpse back here." said Scott, summoning raw energy to his hands "Besides, he can't get in here anyway, the door's welded shut so he won't see anything."

"He'll have a way of getting the door open." noted Jessica "By the way, why did you say "corpse" when talking about Ravage? Are you planning to kill him?"

Scott just gave her a dark expression on his face and he didn't answer her. The lynx felt it was best not to. Unfortunately, that expression of his made Jessica feel nervous all of the sudden.

"You're not are you?" said Jessica worriedly "Please tell me you're not!"

Scott still didn't answer her. Instead, he just sighed and aimed at the ceiling just above the shelves. The shelves reached the ceiling so they could climb up the shelves and get up through the hole in the roof Scott was about to make. He summoned a ball of concentrated energy to his hands and he threw them at the ceiling. The energy balls hit the ceiling and blew a hole in it. Bits of ceiling rained down onto the floor and the shelves below. Taran decided to add some extra punch by firing the laser cannon at the roof. He blasted it three times and made the hole even bigger. The hole was big enough to fit even Vector the Crocodile now. Now they had an escape route, Scott began to climb up the shelves. But Jessica grabbed him by the ankle and stopped him before he could even fully climb up one shelf. Scott looked down at her and noticed a look of fear in her eyes that he didn't like seeing her with. Jessica was not happy about something and he had a feeling he knew what it was.

"Scott, please answer me." said Jessica "Are you planning to kill Ravage?"

Scott groaned in annoyance but her answered her anyway.

"As much as I'd love to, I know it's not the humane way to deal with someone like him." he said grimly "If Ravage blows up so much as one house in Adabat then I will make sure he doesn't live to see another sunrise!"

"You can't do that Scott, killing is not going to make everything right!" cried Jessica "If anything, it'll make you feel worse and unsatisfied with yourself in the end! Please don't kill Ravage, we must stop him from destroying Adabat and bring him to justice, not kill him!"

"Oh shut up Jessica!" yelled Scott angrily "I don't care what you say, if I wanna kill that demon in wolf's clothing then I'll do it! Now stop wasting my time, we've got a country to save!"

With that said, he climbed straight up the weapon shelves and out through the hole in the ceiling. Jessica, followed him, clearly looking horrified at Scott's sudden extreme desire for vengeance and bloodshed. This was not like her boyfriend at all. The whole night was changing him into something she didn't recognize anymore and she had to save him before he lost himself. As for Taran, he put on a belt harness and attached the cannon onto his back. He wanted to take it with him so he could use it to stop Ravage. He climbed up after Jessica and he noticed the cougar seemed shaken by what Scott had said to her.

"What's happening to him?" asked Jessica desperately "He's losing his mind! Scott would never want to kill somebody, regardless of how evil they are! He knows killing isn't right and yet he seems to keen on finishing Ravage off!"

"Can you blame him Jessie?" asked Taran as he reached the last shelf "His country is in danger, his worst enemy is on the lose and he's blackmailed one of your friends into him. Scott's not taking this all well and he's beginning to feel Ravage doesn't deserve to live."

"I don't think he deserves to live but I'm not willing to kill him!" cried Jessica as she climbed up through the hole in the ceiling "It's not the right thing to do! We should bring him to justice and let the court decide his fate, not decide his fate ourselves! I hope I can talk him out of this or I'm gonna lose the Scott I fell for forever!"

"Somehow, I don't think that's gonna be possible sweet cakes." said Taran, climbing through the hole in the ceiling after Jessica.

Jessica's escape plan had worked to perfection because the

trainees were now out of the weapons vault and up on the roof of the weapons hut. Luckily for them, it wasn't a very tall building so all they had to do was slide down the roof and fall down onto the ground. They all slid down the roof and landed foot first onto the ground. Now they were out of the weapons hut at last, Scott turned around and asked Taran something.

"Taran, you've been here longer then we have. Do you know where the vehicles are kept?" he asked.

"I sure do." said Taran "They're over there."

He pointed to a giant hangar bay that was obscured by the darkness of the night but it's lights were on so they could just vaguely see it.

"Good." said Scott "We'll take whatever we can find and drive or fly to Adabat. I think we should drive as none of us know how to fly."

"And we don't have the right gear for flying." noted Jessica.

Army planes and fighter jet pilots required a special suit and helmet due to how high they flew up in those incredible planes and Scott, Jessica and Taran didn't have the required outfits. Not to mention, they couldn't fly a plane so they had to get a road-based vehicle. Scott was semi-capable of driving but he wasn't spectacular, Jessica was just the same whereas Taran had been training with road-based vehicles here a day before they arrived so he would be the best one to do the driving. The Mobians ran over to the hangar bay, which hadn't been locked yet as Mr. Staffer's assistant Gerald the Ferret was making a last minute check-up before bed and they ran inside. Gerald heard them all coming and he was rather surprised to see the new recruits up at this time of night.

"Hello mates." he said "What brings you lot up so early? It's nearly midnight. You can't get a good sleep if you stay up this late."

"Mr. Staffer, we have an emergency." said Scott "Ravage Bloodfang has turned out to still be evil and he's raided your entire bomb supply. He's gone off to Adabat and is going to use them to blow the country up! We need a ride and fast!"

Gerald was so stunned that he felt like he needed a sit down. His fedora slumped over his eyes in surprise and he straightened it again.

"Ravage is still evil…?" he squeaked "And he's…robbed the entire… bomb supply! And to think me and Mr. Staffer believed him for a minute that he was going to redeem himself! We should have took your advice for granted and kicked him outta here the moment he proposed Scott!"

"Yes you should have." said Scott rather rudely "Can we get a ride at all?"

"Well I would lend you blokes my car but it's disappeared for some reason." muttered Gerald "I bet Ravage stole it to go to Adabat in. I'll take you in one of the hover buggies we have, they're great machines and one of the fastest we have."

"Oh thank you Gerald!" said Scott "Thank you dearly!"

"I wonder what Mr. Staffer will have to say about this." murmured Gerald as he went over to a parked hover buggy and he started it up "He'll go ballistic with horror when we tell him everything that's happened. I'll have to make sure there's a nice, secure prison we can send him to once we capture him."

Gerald climbed into the driver's seat of the buggy and the buggy rose up off the floor about five inches. Hover-buggies looked like the traditional dune-buggy only without wheels and they were armed with rotary cannons on the roof of the buggy. It hovered over to the trainees and they all climbed into the back seats as quick as they could. They strapped themselves in and Gerald slammed his foot on the accelerator. The hover-buggy started up and it zoomed off out of the hangar bay and into the darkness of the night.

"Do you know where Adabat is?" Taran called to Gerald from behind him.

"I sure do mate." Gerald answered "I'll get you there in no time and then we can stop Ravage dead in his tracks! I wonder where Felix is. Does he not want to come?"

"No, Ravage blackmailed him into helping him steal the bombs." explained Jessica "He's probably at Adabat with Ravage right now."

"In that case, we save Felix first and then arrest Ravage." said Gerald "Hold on, this trip's gonna be a quick' un!"

He pressed down on the accelerator pedal and the hover-buggy rocketed up to its top speed. It zoomed out of the camp and headed towards Adabat. As the hover-buggy drove to Adabat, Scott put his hands together and prayed hard.

"Please don't be too late, please don't be too late, please don't be too late!" he hissed to himself.

Unfortunately, from the look of things, they were going to be too late unless the hover-buggy was fast enough to get them to Adabat at last…

Meanwhile, Ravage and Felix had almost finished setting up the detonators in Scott and Jessica's village. There had been a lot more houses then Ravage remembered and the darkness of the night and constant running back to get boxes slowed them down a lot so the whole process had taken them almost two hours to do in general. This had given the trainees enough time to catch up and get to Adabat but they hadn't quite arrived yet. They had about ten minutes until they arrived and Ravage and Felix had almost finished their work. They just had five houses left to set up and they ran back to get another box of detonators. They had used a total of six boxes on the entire village so far. There were twenty detonators in each box so they had used one-hundred and ten bombs altogether. Ravage and Felix ran to the car and grabbed another box. Since they only needed five detonators, Ravage didn't bother to bring the entire box; he just grabbed five detonators and carried them by hand to the last five houses he needed to attach detonators to. He and Felix ran back over to the last five houses needing a detonator and Ravage set to the task quickly. He went to the first house and placed a detonator on the door. He went past the second house and placed on underneath a window. He went past the third house and attached a detonator to it, then the fourth and finally the fifth and last house in

the village. The village they were in had a total of one-hundred and fifteen houses and they were all set up with a detonator each, waiting to blow the place sky-high and reduce it to nothing but cinders and ashes. Ravage chuckled to himself, pleased with his work and he prepared to set them to go.

"The whole village is rigged and set." announced Ravage "Say your farewells Felix because this village is going kaboom in a minute."

"If it weren't for the unfortunate nature that I have a detonator on my back, I would club you to Kingdom Valley for this baneful ambition of yours!" yelled Felix angrily.

"Don't be a twerp Felix, I saw you doing pull-ups earlier and you can't even do them properly." sneered Ravage "You have no chance against some one as fit and as powerful as I am!"

"That theory would have to be proven by a one-on-one showdown." noted Felix "Me and you would have to brawl it out with each other to determine whom the strongest of us is."

"And that fight will never happen as I will keep you under lock and key forever Felix." said Ravage "Maybe you can help me with something else in the future."

The peacock folded his arms and scowled to himself, really wishing he hadn't been blackmailed into this by Ravage. Ravage set the timer on the detonator and he activated it. The detonator began to countdown from five minutes. Ravage grinned wider then a crocodile and he ran for his life.

"The village will blow in five minutes!" shouted Ravage "Come on Felix! When that one goes off, they'll all go off!"

Felix stared helplessly at the detonator, wishing dearly he could do something about it but Ravage had him rigged to blow if he disobeyed his orders so the peacock had no choice but to leave the place to blow. Felix ran away from the village, his eyes streaming with silent tears and he along with Ravage ran out of range as the countdown neared zero.

Meanwhile, Gerald and the trainees had finally arrived at Adabat. They were up on the cliff tops that loomed above the village below and they were relieved to see the country appeared to still be standing for the moment.

"I think we made it!" cried Scott "Adabat's still alive! We made it! Now we can stop Ravage before…"

His sentence was cut off by the detonator's countdown reaching zero and then exploding in a huge fiery inferno that ripped its way through the surrounding houses and set off all the other detonators. The detonators all began to go off in unison, turning the fiery blaze that started off this chain reaction to a blazing inferno that put every single bonfire party to shame. The whole scene was incredible and horrifying to anyone witnessing it. Gerald stopped the hover-buggy hastily as the explosions continued to rage on through the village and Scott burst out of the vehicle. He was so horrified I cannot begin to describe it to you how horrified he truly was. The explosions continued to rage through the village and the village was slowly but surely being reduced to cinders by the chain reaction going off with the detonators.

"NO!" screamed Scott "We're too late! He's blown up a village!"

"I think…that's OUR village he's blowing up!" cried Jessica, climbing out of the buggy to join Scott "I recognize this area!"

"This IS out village!" yelled Scott "The village me and you moved to after we left the other one to escape the bullying! We're homeless now thanks to that monster Ravage Bloodfang!"

Gerald shared their pity for he didn't like it when people lost their homes. The whole thing seemed to have a saddening effect on him.

"That's your village that's being destroyed now?" asked Gerald sympathetically.

"It is." said Scott, his eyes streaming with angry tears that poured down his cheeks like rainfall "That's where me and Jessica live… and Ravage has just blown it up! Not only are we homeless but hundreds of innocents live in that village and they'll all be dead now

Ravage has destroyed the village!"

He thumped the ground in agony and he wailed to himself. At the bottom of the cliffs, the village had finished exploding and now a huge blazing fire rioted through the wrecked remains. The fire would take a while to put out due to how large and uncontrolled it was and it wouldn't burn out in a hurry. It would probably blaze on for days. One hundred and fifteen houses had been swiftly destroyed and hundreds of citizens were all being burnt alive or were already destroyed by the explosions. At the bottom of the cliffs, Ravage was dancing about in absolute joy, shrieking like a whirling dervish and cackling like a mad man. Felix however, turned away from the destroyed village and hid his face in shame.

"Yes! I did it!" he cackled to himself "I've destroyed Scott and Jessica's home village! What I wouldn't give to see their horrified faces if they were watching this now!

To Ravage's bad luck, Scott and the others were right above his head and Scott heard him crowing to himself. He stopped crying and he looked down at the bottom of the cliff. He saw Ravage cheering madly and his whole body began to shake in rage. He clenched his teeth and his hazel eyes burned with hatred.

"There he is!" yelled Scott, pointing down at the bottom of the cliff "There's Ravage! The heartless demon who did this!"

"He's right under our noses?" piped Jessica "I didn't expect to find him that quickly."

"Well I'm glad we have…" snarled Scott "Because that just mean I get to KILL him quicker!"

Scott leaped straight off the cliff and hurtled down towards Ravage before anyone could stop him. He roared a vicious battle cry down to Ravage as he neared the ground. His hands were blazing with energy and he looked like he was going to go rabid. Ravage stopped crowing to himself and he looked up, only to see his arch-enemy about to land on his head. Ravage shrieked in alarm and Scott landed directly on top of him. Ravage however, pushed him off of himself and sent him rolling onto his back. Ravage picked himself

up and he bared his claws. Scott clenched his fists and he lunged at Ravage. He and the wolf then engaged each other in a fist fight that was a flurry of mad punches and flying fists that could break anybody's teeth. Now Ravage was distracted, Felix flew up to the cliff tops out of Ravage's way and he was rather surprised to see Jessica, Taran and Gerald all here at once. His face brightened immensely.

"Friends, you've come to rescue me at last!" he cried "And of course, stop Ravage from destroying Adabat. I regret to inform you that you're too late to save your…"

"We know, we know. We've just seen it Felix." said Jessica "Our village is in ruins thanks to Ravage. Now turn around."

Felix did as he was told and he turned around. Jessica could see the bulge in his shirt from the detonator on his back and she stuck her hand up Felix's shirt. The peacock jumped slightly and Jessica grabbed the detonator.

"Steady girl" said Felix "It's…"

Jessica didn't wait and she proceeded to rip the detonator off Felix's back, tearing off a clump of feathers in the process and making him squawk in pain.

"OUCH! …taped to my back!" grunted Felix as he rubbed the sore spot on his back.

"Sorry." said Jessica, giving the detonator to Gerald "At least you don't have to serve that horrible Ravage anymore."

"Agreed. I'd discard that detonator if I were you." said Felix, turning to Gerald "Ravage has a remote for it and he might set it off in the false believing that it'll destroy me."

"OK then." said Gerald, throwing the detonator onto the floor and crushing it with his foot.

The detonator was in bits and pieces now, rendering it completely useless to anybody. Felix was saved at last and back on the side of good once again.

"I apologize greatly for ever getting involved in Ravage's abysmal schemes dear Jessica." said Felix sadly "I do hope you can forgive me for this."

"I can Felix." said Jessica "It wasn't your fault. Ravage just got you by surprise and he used you for his nefarious needs. Now you're back on our side, you can help use stop that demonic wolf before he destroys the rest of Adabat."

"I'll go and get my car back so he can't use any of the bombs." said Gerald "You blokes, bring that deceptive little terrorist down now!"

"With pleasure." said Taran, taking the laser cannon off his back and priming it.

"Felix, me and you are helping Scott down there." said Jessica "Taran, you stay up here and distract him with that gun of yours but DON'T kill him! Set it to stun so we can detain him easier."

"Got it baby." said Taran, setting his gun to stun mode instead of shoot mode.

"Right, now we've set up our positions, let's get down there and help Scott Felix!" ordered Jessica.

"Right away my brave little cougar." said Felix, holding onto Jessica's hands with his talons and carrying her up off the ground as he flew into the air.

Gerald climbed down the cliffs to get his caw while Felix swooped down to the ground with Jessica in his talons and they headed to Scott and Ravage. The two were in a pretty serious conflict right now. They were punching and kicking each other hard enough to knock their brains out and they were both roaring at each other. Scott's was more of a battle cry roar whereas Ravage was a proper, vicious, fierce, animal roar. Scott summoned energy to his hands in order to make his punches harder and he punched Ravage repeatedly in the jaw. The wolf felt the full force of his punches as Scott let loose on him. The lynx was in blind rage mode over what the wolf had just done to his village. The destroyed village continued to blaze as they were fighting. Ravage growled fiercely at Scott and

he snapped his jaws at him in an attempt to bite him. Scott recoiled and he kicked upwards at Ravage's chin. He hit it and Ravage gripped his throbbing teeth. Ravage retaliated with a furious backhand and he sent Scott hurling into the foot of the cliffs. Scott wheezed loudly as pain surged up his back and Ravage ran up to him, his cape flowing behind him gracefully as he did so. Ravage grabbed Scott by the throat and he pinned him to the rock behind him. Scott choked and spluttered and he clutched Ravage's arms.

"You horrible, wretched child!" snarled Ravage "How did you manage to get out of the weapons vault? I welded it shut and stole all the bombs!"

"We…blew a…hole…in the ceiling!" croaked Scott "That's…how!"

"I should have known you'd be smart enough to think of something like that." grumbled Ravage "Oh well, you're much too late to save your pretty little village! I've just destroyed it and soon the whole country will go up in flames with it!"

"It will…not!" gagged Scott as Ravage throttled him ever harder "I…am…gonna…kill you…and…put an end…to your…evil Ravage!"

"Snerk! Kill me? Pah! In what universe?" sneered Ravage "I am more powerful then you'll ever be! Your energy powers only make you more persistent, not stronger!"

"SHUT UP!" bellowed Scott, kneeing Ravage directly in the gut and making the wolf let go of him so he could clutch his gut.

Scott then let loose a flurry of angry punches on the wolf. He punched at him so hard and so fast that Ravage didn't have time to defend himself and he couldn't block the attacks as he couldn't keep up with him. Ravage however, decided to drop down on the ground and kick Scott in the shin. The lynx fell down on one leg and Ravage gave him an uppercut that almost knocked him out. The lynx lay on the ground, gurgling stupidly to himself. Ravage advanced on Scott maliciously with his teeth showing.

"You know what Scott, what are you getting so worked up about?" crowed Ravage "Is it me destroying the village or is it the fact you've

been expelled from the R.F.S? Either way, you really oughta calm yourself down young man or you'll just end up killing yourself."

"Just…keep talking…Ravage!" snarled Scott.

He leaped onto his feet and roared at the top of his voice. He punched at Ravage but Ravage grabbed his arm and threw him into the blazing wreck of the village. Scott quickly got back up and leaped out of the wreckage before he could catch fire and burn. He tried to attack Ravage but Ravage backhanded him in the back of his head and knocked him down onto the ground. Scott groaned in pain and he rubbed himself tenderly. Ravage stomped on his back and made him scream in pain.

"You really should have stayed back at base instead of following me here Scott the wretch!" crowed Ravage "You would have been much better off there then here! Oh well, you would be coming home to Adabat on a plane only to find it's been wiped off the map by yours truly so you'd hunt me down and terminate me. And for what? A country that's been destroyed! So face it boy, if you finally do defeat me, your victory won't feel complete because I will have won too! You'll live with this for the rest of your life and it'll haunt you until the day you die!"

All of this was just making the lynx cry tears of fury. He could feel the anger flowing through his veins like a raging current and he was so mad at Ravage, he wanted to tear him apart and stomp on his remains. Scott elbowed Ravage in the foot, making the wolf lift his foot off his back and the lynx leaped back onto his feet. He prepared to do battle once again. The tears continued to trickle down his face and stain the fur under his eyes.

"I'll eat you alive Ravage!" screamed Scott "I swear to the Royals I'll make you pay for this!"

"Then stop wasting your much needed breath and kill me already!" snapped Ravage "An angry hero doesn't waste time with cheesy quotes and pathetic battle talk!"

Scott just flipped and punched at Ravage. The lynx's anger was playing right into Ravage's plan beautifully. Scott's fury was making

him unfocused and uncoordinated so he couldn't fight Ravage as well as he was trying to. Scott punched at Ravage but he missed and Ravage punched him directly in the eye. Scott yelled in pain and he clutched his throbbing eye, which had just swollen and become purple in colour. Ravage then proceeded to upwards kick Scott and knock him onto his side. The lynx grunted in annoyance and he tried to get up but Ravage kicked him and sent him rolling across the ground. Ravage chortled at his fallen nemesis and he prepared to kill him with one flick of the jaws but just as he bent down to chomp on Scott's neck, Jessica jumped onto his back and pinned him down. The wolf effortlessly freed himself and threw her onto her back. He picked himself up but Felix flew in from behind and ripped shreds in his cape with his talons. He scratched Ravage's back viciously and tore great clumps out of his cape. Ravage snarled loudly and he backhanded Felix into the ground.

"How dare you mar my lovely little cape?" he roared "It doesn't come cheap you know!"

"As if I have an ounce of care in my soul for that." snapped Felix, pulling out two stiffened tail-feathers and preparing to use them "I'm tired of helping you in your nefarious needs Ravage so I am going to aid my friends in your downfall! And do not attempt to use the detonator, it has been removed and destroyed so I am free from your treachery at last!"

Ravage grumbled in fury and he bared his claws.

"I should have expected that to happen!" grumbled Ravage "If Scott's here, his girlfriend's going to be here too and I bet she helped you while I was beating the tar out of Scott Lynx!"

"I did Ravage." said Jessica, leaping in and giving Ravage a left hook that cracked his mask and knocked him down onto his shoulder "Felix happens to be a very, very good friend of mine and anyone who blackmails him or threatens his life in anyway answers to the cougar! On Felix's behalf, I'll see you imprisoned Ravage!"

"And on behalf of my own well-being, I'll see you three becoming my next meal!" retorted Ravage, picking himself up and giving Jessica a right and a left hook each on her face.

Jessica retaliated with a dropkick to the face that made Ravage stagger backwards and Felix clubbed him in the back of his legs. Ravage fell down onto his knees and Felix clubbed him on the head. The wolf roared in pain and he elbowed Felix in the head. He then turned around and roundhouse punched the peacock in the body, knocking him over onto his side. Jessica pile-dived Ravage in the back and made the wolf roar in pain. Ravage roundhouse punched at Jessica but the cougar ducked and head-butted him in the stomach, Ravage kneed her back in the stomach and then slashed her across the face. Jessica retaliated with an energy spear to the jaw and Ravage recoiled. Jessica summoned energy to her hands and she gave Ravage an uppercut that literally took him off his feet! Ravage hurtled through the air and he landed rather awkwardly on his back. Ravage clutched his back in pain as he tried to get the bones in his spine to knit but just as he stood up, Jessica walloped him with another energy-enhanced punch that sent Ravage hurling into the cliff tops. Ravage grumbled in pain and Jessica charged towards him at top speed. Ravage grabbed a rock that had fallen out of the grove he'd made in the surface and he threw it at Jessica. The rock hit her in the leg and she tripped over. Ravage then lunged for her but Felix flew in his way and rapidly kicked him in the face to keep him away from Jessica. He then twirled around and walloped Ravage with his tail-feathers. He landed behind Ravage and tripped him up with his tail-feathers. Ravage snarled angrily and he grabbed several of Felix's tail feathers in his claws. He tried to remove them but Felix clubbed him on the nose before he could. Ravage retaliated with an uppercut to the chin that almost knocked Felix's beak off. Scott finally picked himself up and he leaped on Ravage but the wolf grabbed him and slammed him directly into the cliff surface. Being slammed directly into rock was always going to be painful and Scott clearly felt the pain of that. Jessica tried to attack Ravage but Ravage threw Scott straight into her and the two ended up falling head over heels over each other. Ravage then charged towards the two but Felix clubbed him from behind and made him trip. The wolf picked himself up but Scott and Jessica leaped in and teamed up on him. They both let loose a flurry of energy enhanced punches all over Ravage's body but somehow, the wolf seemed to be taking them, with great effort though. The wolf growled furiously and he grabbed both of them by their hair. He bashed their heads together and threw Scott and Jessica away from himself. Taran then

picked the right moment to try and stun Ravage. He fired his new weapon at Ravage but the wolf saw the blasts and he dodged them. Taran's aim was lacking as he hadn't had enough practice with weaponry so hitting Ravage was going to be difficult. Taran fired repeatedly at Ravage but the lynx just couldn't seem to land a blow on him. Ravage then proceeded to run up the cliff tops and straight up towards Taran. Taran began frantically shooting at Ravage but Ravage dodged the blasts and he leaped onto the cliff top. He landed behind Taran and horse-kicked him off the cliff and down to the ground below. Felix flew up and quickly caught Taran before the lynx could become a nasty stain on the ground. Ravage climbed back down the cliff and prepared to leap on Felix as he lowered Taran down to the ground but Ravage was suddenly stricken by a duo of energy spears fired by Scott and Jessica. Ravage tripped and he fell to the ground in a particularly painful manner. The wolf groaned and he rubbed himself better only for Scott and Jessica to leap in and pile-dive him. Felix put Taran down on the ground and Taran fired his weapon at Ravage. Ravage dodged the blast again and he leaped on Taran. He snatched the weapon off of him and he blasted Taran with it. Since it was set to stun though, the blast didn't kill him and Taran fell onto his back, writhing in pain but the stun blast. Ravage growled furiously, thinking the weapon was useless and he then attempted to batter Taran around the head with it but Jessica kicked him in the back and made him drop it. Ravage retaliated by grabbing Jessica's arm and throwing her over his shoulder and onto her back. Felix tried to club him but Ravage grabbed his arm and slammed him down onto the ground. He saw Scott coming and the wolf charged at Scott on all fours. He rammed Scott in the stomach and he knocked him over. He then proceeded to slash Scott across the face and then slash him on his shoulder with his claws. The lynx cried out in pain and Ravage then clamped his jaws on the lynx's arm. Scott screamed in pain and he fisted Ravage directly in the eye with an energy enhanced punch. Ravage let go of Scott and the lynx roundhouse kicked him in the head. However, that bite had done quite a bit to Scott's arm and the lynx could hardly feel it due to how badly bitten it was. He clutched his arm and grimaced in pain. Ravage attempted to attack Scott but Taran got back to his feet and rammed him with his shoulder. Ravage elbowed him on the top of his head and knocked him onto his hands and knees. Then he grabbed Taran and threw him straight

into Felix. The peacock was knocked out of the sky and onto the ground. Jessica leaped in with a couple of left and right hooks each but Ravage blocked the blows with his arm and he gave Jessica and uppercut that took her off her feet. Scott tried to deck Ravage again but Ravage kneed him in the gut, elbowed him in the back and then kicked him onto the ground. He kicked him and sent him rolling away from him. The lynx came to a halt, lying on his front and groaning loudly. Ravage cackled evilly and he advanced on Scott.

"Ah this brings back memories doesn't it?" sneered Ravage "Memories of all the times I wiped the floor with you! And look, I'm still able to do it! Even if you have friends with you, you're still unable to defeat me! This team of yours is as pathetic as you are!"

Scott got up onto his knees and he grunted heavily. He tried to pick himself up but he didn't really have the strength to do so. Ravage had beaten him too badly.

"Well Scott, allow me to finish you and your team off along with Adabat!" growled Ravage gleefully, baring his claws and licking his lips "You can all be my celebration dinner tomorrow, celebration in the sense I'm celebrating the death of Adabat and all it's people!"

"No…No…" said Scott hoarsely, still staring at the ground.

"Excuse me?" asked Ravage "I don't speak mumble language. Care to speak up?"

"No…" said Scott shakily "You…will…not…destroy…my…country."

"Oh really?" scoffed Ravage "Says who?"

"Says me…" retorted Scott "I'M NOT FINISHED WITH YOU YET!"

Then suddenly, he leapt onto his feet and pounded Ravage in the face with energy enhanced punches. The lynx's fury was past burning point and he was even angrier then before. He began to punch Ravage at a speed that could put a kung-fu master to shame and his punches only got stronger as he launched them. The poor wolf could only try to hold on as Scott punched him at such a brilliant speed he couldn't keep up with the furious lynx. Scott continued to

pound Ravage at a furious pace and then he punched Ravage and sent him skidding backwards. The wolf gasped in pain and then suddenly, Jessica, Taran and Felix all teamed up on him with attacks of their own. Jessica punched him with energy enhanced punches, Taran gave him an uppercut and Felix clubbed him all over his body. The poor wolf couldn't keep up with their teamwork and he was beginning to falter under their onslaughts. Scott then charged in, roaring at the top of his voice and he walloped Ravage so hard that the wolf ended up falling onto his back with a sharp thud and he wheezed in pain. Scott grabbed Ravage by the throat and he pinned him down to the ground. The lynx's eyes were burning with hatred and his clenched teeth flashed at Ravage viciously. Ravage just scowled at the lynx and he stared straight at him.

"Go ahead, kill me!" he ordered "The Royals will only execute me for treason and there's nowhere else I can get in and you may never have a better opportunity then this so finish me! But will it make you feel better boy?"

"It most certainly will!" retorted Scott "Prepare to go on a road trip to hell you devil!"

"What?" squeaked Ravage "Wait! No, don't!"

Scott ignored him and he prepared to finish Ravage off once and for all. But the lynx was stopped by Jessica calling to him.

"Scott! Please don't kill him!" cried Jessica "You're better then this! Don't sink to his level!"

"Jessica, this is my best chance to end him and put him out of our lives once and for all!" retorted Scott "I may not get another chance! I've got to finish him off!"

"But what does that make you Scott?" asked Jessica sternly "If you kill Ravage, that makes you just as bad as he is! And that's not the Scott I fell for! Please don't lose yourself! I can't bear to lose you Scott!"

Her eyes brimmed with tears. The lynx took in Jessica's words and he began to reconsider his actions. He glared back at Ravage and

he began to simmer down. The wolf just pulled a confused expression at him and wondered what the lynx was up to.

"Well? Aren't you going to finish me?" asked Ravage.

Scott didn't answer. He lowered his fist and he relaxed his expression. He had just realized what he was becoming. A monster. A murderous monster, the one thing he didn't want to become. He didn't want to upset his girlfriend or his brother. And killing Ravage wouldn't make everything better, it would just make him feel hollow and empty inside and dis-satisfied. His village would still be in ruins and he'd just end up feeling horrible for what he'd just done. Scott stood up from Ravage and he turned away from him. He began to feel shaky. His eyes were brimming with tears. He began to feel dreadful.

"This…this isn't me!" he gasped to himself "What am I becoming? I'm becoming something similar to Ravage! Jessica's right, I am no better then he is!"

He sighed heavily and he turned to Ravage.

"You live, but you're going to prison!" he said sharply "And don't try to resist or I'll knock your block off!"

"Whatever." muttered Ravage "I'm too weak to move anyway."

Scott turned away from Ravage and he staggered towards Jessica. The cougar embraced her grief-stricken boyfriend warmly and Scott embraced her back.

"Oh Jessica, I'm so sorry!" wailed Scott "I was so angry at what Ravage had done I lost sight of who I am and what a true Royal Fighter should be! I'm so, so sorry babe!"

"Oh Scott, it's alright now." said Jessica "We've beaten Ravage and now we can arrest him. I'm so glad you listened to me. I knew you wouldn't lose yourself to your hatred like I feared you would do."

"Oh I feel dreadful now." said Scott shakily, letting go of Jessica and hugging himself "I beat Ravage but in the end, I just wasn't myself and it wasn't really satisfying. At least I'll feel better once he's in

prison. We should get Gerald to detain him and then we can take him to a prison cell where he can rot."

"Here he comes now." said Felix.

Gerald had moved the car full of bombs out of the battlefield and he ran over to the trainees. He'd been watching the entire fight and now he was needed, he came in to arrest Ravage. Before he could see what was happening though, Ravage leaped onto his feet and he charged up the cliffs. Scott desperately fired some energy spears at the wolf but he missed and the wolf escaped onto the cliff tops.

"We'll meet again boy!" yelled Ravage "And when we do, Adabat will finally be wiped off the map for good!"

And with that he disappeared into the darkness of the night, leaving the trainees to stand there and scowl at themselves. Scott thumped the ground angrily and he cursed his bad luck.

"Damn it!" he yelled "The scoundrel got away! When am I finally going to catch that nefarious scum-bag and throw him in prison!"

"We'll get him someday." said Jessica "We've come close a lot of times and this one has been our closest yet. I'm just glad he's leaving now so Adabat can sleep peacefully tonight."

"Not all of it Jessica." muttered Scott "Our village is no more and it still continues to burn. What a terrible night this has been. Ravage destroys our village, I almost lose myself and he gets away. This is the worst night of my life!"

"I can see what you're going though lad." said Gerald sympathetically "You're not pleased with yourself because your greatest enemy has escaped and your village is gone. I know how sad it is but there is some light in this dark hour."

"There is?" asked Scott "What do you mean?"

"I watched the entire fight and I was impressed to see your humility come through when it looked like you were about to kill Ravage." said Gerald "That and your teamwork and fighting skills impressed me greatly. Maybe we were wrong to expel you son. If you can

control your temper, you can be a great Royal Fighter."

"Thank you sir." said Scott "So what do you think about this?"

"I think we should give you another chance." said Gerald "We should let you back into the R.F.S. and since I'm at the same rank as Mr. Staffer, I can also make the decisions. And I say you can join us again but you must promise to behave yourself and train hard and that way, you can be a great Royal Fighter and a valuable asset to the team."

Scott was so overwhelmed with joy he was about to go crazy with excitement. Instead, he kept himself under control and he bowed down to Gerald.

"Thank you so much sir!" he said happily "I promise I'll reshape myself into the Royal Fighter I can be and I won't let you down sir!"

"That's the spirit lad." said Gerald happily "You know when your training is complete, I think you four can all become the Adabat Royal Fighters and we can set up a camp here to honour the innocent lives who died here tonight. We could make it a memorial sight and you can set up base here. You four are going to become fine Royal Fighters indeed."

"Thank you sir." everybody said at once.

This bit of good news wouldn't last though as Dr. Eggman treacherous servant bot Alonzo was preparing to unleash his secret project anytime soon and when he did, it would destroy everybody on Mobius* and make him supreme ruler of the planet…

Footnotes:

***This arc takes place before Stories 77 and 78**

Finally, this arc is over! It really is a shame it got delayed for so long! Oh well, the Adabat Royal Fighters look like they're going

to be a great group don't they? Tune in next time for Tales from Mobius when Wilson and Mandy go to Megapolis for a special mission. Reviews are welcome.

Pain in Megapolis 1

Arc 10: Pain in Megapolis

Takes place during Stories 88-90 in Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: The Pains Never Fade

Run.

Run like hell.

That was the only thing on the minds of the two terrified Royal Fighter soldiers that pelted like mad through the rocky canyons that loomed above them. They were on a mission together and something was attacking them. Something that was following them with all haste and showing no signs of slowing down or backing out of the chase. It was keen to get them and possibly kill them and as they hadn't dealt with this kind of threat before, they were keen as heck to get away from it before it could catch them. The two soldiers were a dingo and a tiger respectively. They both wore combat fatigues and they wielded a variety of weapons. The dingo wielded a machete and a standard handheld pistol. The tiger wielded two revolvers. They were well trained soldiers but they were not trained to combat unseen threats so they were keen to get out of here as quick as they could. But no matter how hard they ran, the attacker just perused them ever harder and would not give up the chase. It leaped from cliff to cliff as it chased them through the canyon and it tried to electrocute them with a brilliant blue zap of electricity. The zaps missed the fleeing soldiers and the tiger drew out his revolvers. He shot desperately at the attacker but being as he was running like crazy and the attacker wasn't really in their field of view, he couldn't see it very well and therefore, he missed every shot. The tiger gave up on the futile attempt to stop the creature and he put his revolvers away. He and his partner continued to run, their hearts pounding hard enough to smash through their ribcages. Then suddenly, to add insult to injury to themselves, they took a wrong turning and ended

up charging down a narrow canyon and towards a dead end. They screeched to a halt and stared straight up at the cliff that loomed above them. They were absolutely trapped. There was nowhere else to go and they had no way of escape. The attacker was going to catch them now.

"We're trapped!" cried the tiger "Barkley, what should we do now?"

"I would suggest climbing out of here but that'll slow us down enough to get ourselves caught by this thing that's after us!" yelled the dingo who's name was Barkley "I say we fight this thing Kron! Fight it and make it pay for killing our friends and comrades the past few days it's been doing so!"

"We may not be trained to fight unseen threats but that doesn't mean we should let it kill us!" shouted the tiger whose name was apparently Kron.

"I agree, we're the Royal Fighters of Megapolis!" declared Barkley, pulling out his pistol and loading it "We're not letting some stupid creature with electric attacks scare the cuss outta us!"

Kron whipped out his revolvers and he held them up at the cliff tops. The attacker didn't seem to be lurking above them. If anything, it appeared to have vanished. It was nowhere to be seen and yet it was chasing them a moment ago. Had it given up the chase or was it lying in wait for them? The two soldiers kept their guard up and remained heavily vigilant, their eyes open for the slightest movement and their ears pricked up for the tiniest sound that could answer their questions.

"Where are you mystery creature?" bellowed Kron "Come on out and face us!"

"You'll pay for killing all those other men you've killed the past week!" yelled Barkley "Come out so we can punish you for your crimes!"

Their voices echoed ominously through the canyons. But nothing happened. Nobody leaped out and dared to attack them. Nothing stirred and no noise was heard. It was quite clear that the attacker

had gone. Kron and Barkley lowered their weapons and looked around nervously.

"It must have gone." said Barkley "It's not coming out to get us."

"Don't be ludicrous Barkley, why would it give up on the chase?" snapped Kron "It had us! It was right on our tails! It won't suddenly just give up! It must be lying in wait for us!"

And Kron was absolutely right. The attacker was lying in wait for them. It was clinging onto the cliff top right above their heads and it pointed a shiny, metal, clawed finger at them. It fired a huge bolt of electricity at them and it hit the ground between the fighters. Kron and Barkley jumped in alarm and they began shooting madly at the creature. Their guns did a chorus of banging and bullets flying as they fired them. But the creature dodged their attacks and sent an energy wave sweeping towards them. The wave hit the two soldiers and knocked them onto their feet. The creature leaped down from the cliff and landed in front of the downed soldiers. Barkley drew out his machete and he tried to slash the creature but it zapped him and made him drop the machete. The creature that stood before them was none other then Sonic the Hedgehog's alien nemesis Marik the Martian! The Martian stood before the two soldiers and he snatched their weapons. He held both of Kron's revolvers in each hand and he pointed one at Kron and one at Barkley. It was quite clear Marik wanted them both dead. Kron and Barkley stared at him, petrified with fear at the sadistic peace hater that stared emotionlessly at them with Kron's guns in his hands.

"Wh-wh-who are you?" asked Kron worriedly.

"I am Marik the Martian." said Marik plainly "And I will not have you morons getting in the way of my plans…"

He then flashed them a sick, twisted grin as he pulled the triggers on the revolvers and they went off with two bangs together. The sound that followed this were two death screams in unison that echoed hauntingly through the canyons…

This kind of event grabbed the attention of a young Royal Fighter working for the Royal Fighters of Megapolis. She was a beautiful seventeen year old female cheetah named Kiara. She was the fastest member of the Megapolis Royal Fighters (helped heavily by the fact she's a cheetah) and she was the messenger of the group. She had long, blonde hair, purple eye shadow, yellow fur with black spots and she was nice and curvy in many places. She wore black leather trousers and a black sleeveless shirt with the R.F.S logo on the heart side of her chest. She didn't wear shoes as she felt she ran better without them and as well as her speed, she was a pretty keen fighter despite her young age. She'd joined the R.F.S recently and had made a good impression despite being a recent addition. Kiara had gotten the news of Barkley and Kron's deaths and she ran straight back to the Royal Fighter camp and North Megapolis. Kiara ran into the camp and skidded to a halt just beside the Megapolis Royal Fighter leader, Field Marshal Thomas K. Tiger. He was a good friend of Bunnie Rabbot, a cyborg Royal Fighter from Mobotropolis and he was highly devoted to his duty. He hadn't seen much action since Eggman's forces over Megapolis had finally been defeated but now he was having many problems and Kiara's message would just add to those problems.

"Field Marshal Thomas!" cried Kiara "I've got some terrible news for you!"

"Inform me then dear Kiara." said Thomas, worried on what she had to say now.

"Corporals Barkley Dingo and Kron the Tiger just got…killed in the Mega Canyons." said Kiara in a tone that sounded like she was regretting having to tell him this piece of news "The mysterious attacker has stricken again."

Thomas's expression was a combination hurt, fear and worry. The poor tiger didn't know what to do accept for stand there in shock and ponder on this piece of news the cheetah had just given him.

"That's…terrible!" gasped Thomas "Those two were some of my best men! And now they've fallen victim to the canyon monster!"

"That now makes twelve casualties this week!" piped Kiara "We're

running out of men and we NEED to get through that canyon in order to stop Dr. Eggman's abandoned Egg Blaster! Who knows when he'll suddenly decide to use it again once he finds out it still stands?"

"Well something in the canyon clearly doesn't want us to go anywhere near the laser." muttered Thomas grimly as he thought on this pressing matter "But we cannot let it stop us now. We must destroy that weapon before Eggman puts it back in use or some other evil person decides to use it himself. The details our best spy gave us indicate it could spell doom on us all if it fires so we must destroy it!"

"But what can we do sir if something keeps killing our men?" asked Kiara "We don't have flying vehicles so we can't fly over the canyons and the only way to that laser is through the Mega Canyons and something keeps killing our men."

"I'm going to send for some professional help." said Thomas "I'm going to see if I can get some assistance from any of the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters. I sincerely hope we can get Sonic the Hedgehog to help us. Otherwise our mission will never be completed…"

Speaking of Mobotropolis Royal Fighters, two had gone out to the city of Grand Metropolis, the second largest city on Mobius for something. Those two were veteran fighters Wilson the Dog and his girlfriend Mandy Mouse. They weren't unfamiliar with Grand Metropolis as they had once saved it from a drilling operation hosted by the Mistress of Darkness, who turned out to be Mandy's younger sister Marion*. Marion was later returned to the good side after her servant bot tried to kill her but she was unfortunately killed when the drill was destroyed by the Robians after she'd tricked them. The whole event had left Mandy devastated and her parents, which had recently been de-roboticized along with everybody else on Mobius when Mecha Tails set the roboticizer in reverse**, were shattered when Mandy had to tell them why Marion wasn't coming back to them. Right now, Mandy had come to Grand Metropolis to pay her respects to Marion and Wilson had just come along in case she

needed a shoulder to cry on. Mandy wondered over to her sister's grave which had a nicely carved gravestone that read "Here's to Marion Mouse, an enemy who became a hero. May she rest in peace and have good luck in heaven." and it had a decaying old rose that Mandy had left there before. Mandy moved away the old rose and lay down a fresh one that she'd recently bought from the florist on her way to Grand Metropolis. The mouse did her best to hold in her tears as she lay down the gift.

"Hi Marion." she said to the little gravestone before her "How are you doing sis? Is heaven as nice as people think it is?"

Nobody answered for Mandy was talking to a gravestone. The mouse smiled at herself as if she noticed how silly she was being and was grinning at her stupidity more then anything.

"I bet it's lovely up there Marion." said Mandy with a weak smile on her face "And guess what sis? We're winning this war with Dr. Eggman at long last. Eggman's gone into hiding and he hasn't shown up since the last time we saw him. I guess we've finally beaten him into submission."

She received no response but in her mind, Marion was talking back to her so Mandy didn't feel entirely like she was talking to herself at least.

"I know what you'd say if you were here." chuckled Mandy ""Yippee! We're winning sis! I can't believe it!". Just a pity you're not here to say it."

Her ears drooped down in despair. It was quite clear she missed Marion terribly and she was finding it hard to hold in the tears now. They were brimming around her eyes but she did her best to keep them in.

"Here's one thing you'll love to hear." she said, trying to think of something to keep her mind occupied "I got to use Eggman's face for stress relief, twice. How cool does that sound sis? I know what you'd say about this. "That was so cool Mandy! Do it again for your little sister will you please?" and I'd say "With pleasure little sis." and just for laughs, I'd do it again."

She laughed briefly to herself before falling back into despair. Nothing Mandy did was really working. She was still finding herself about to break down in tears and she didn't really want to do it on Marion's grave so Mandy decided now was the time to leave.

"I'm sorry but I've gotta go Marion." said Mandy "Bye, bye little sis and remember that I still love you, even if you're not with me right now. See you later Marion."

With that said, she left Marion's grave behind and walked back over to her sleek, shiny hover car which was parked a considerable and respectful distance away from the gravesite. Wilson was standing by the car and he noticed his girlfriend appeared to be in a state of despair so he decided to come in and try to make her feel better. Mandy threw her arms around Wilson and grasped him in a hug. The mouse finally let go of the tears and she let them trickle down her face. Wilson hugged Mandy back and let her wail over his shoulder. He didn't have siblings himself, he was an only child, but he knew how Mandy felt right now and he knew she needed him to make her feel better. He loved Mandy dearly and wanted to be there for her whenever she needed him most and right now, she really needed him.

"Sniff! Oh Wilson, how does one cope with the loss of one's relatives?" wailed Mandy, sniffing loudly "I miss Marion so very much and I desperately want her back now but she'll never come back because she's dead! Oh why did she have to die? Why?"

"Everybody dies sometime Mandy and at times, it's when you least expect it." said Wilson sadly, stroking Mandy's back affectionately "You just happened to be very unlucky and Marion's life was unfortunately claimed much too early. It seems very unfair and you may wish you could do something about it but sadly, we can't. That's the way of life I'm afraid, live life to the end as they say."

"I…I know Wilson." said Mandy, wiping her eyes dry "Even though Marion's death wasn't when I would have liked it, I can't continue to let it bother me. My parents wouldn't want me to be a miserable wreck that's constantly tearing herself up because her sister's dead. And Marion wouldn't want me to act like this either."

"I bet she wouldn't." said Wilson supportively "She'd want you to carry on for her and you've done so brilliantly these past months Mandy. Don't let your sister down by tearing yourself apart now or you'll be going against your word. And I'm sure Marion wouldn't want that from you would she?"

"She would not." said Mandy agreeably "Marion had strong feelings against people who broke promises and I'm not going to let her down by breaking the promise I made her the day she died."

"That's my girl!" said Wilson happily, embracing Mandy warmly once again "Always willing to fight, no matter the obstacles she may come across! I'm glad you're all sorted now."

"Well I just needed some advice from the cutest little doggie I've ever met." said Mandy coyly, tapping Wilson's nose teasingly "As well as a shoulder to cry on. I'm so glad I met you as a kid Wilson. I don't know what my life would be like if never met you."

"Nor do I." said Wilson "I'm glad I met you Mandy. Otherwise my life would be incomplete if you weren't in it."

"Aw you're such a sweetheart Wilson!" giggled Mandy "Who on Mobius taught you to say such lovely things to me?"

"I guess I just learnt what to say by heart." said Wilson casually "My dad always said to me "Girls love a boy who can say nice, fluffy things to them" and I thought that sounded like good advice so I kept to it."

"If that's the case then you're dad knows how to treat a lady properly." said Mandy teasingly.

Before the two could talk some more, Grand Metropolis Royal Fighter General Bostock ran up to them as quick as he could. He was a good friend of Wilson and Mandy's even though he betrayed them briefly for the sake of his city and since the fall of Eggman's forces in Grand Metropolis, the city had been at peace and the Grand Metropolis Royal Fighters had pretty much had it easy since then. But now, it seemed Bostock had something important to tell them. His face looked grave.

"Wilson, Mandy! Thank goodness you two are here!" cried Bostock "I have a message to deliver to you."

"You do? What's it about?" asked Wilson.

"The Megapolis Royal Fighters are having some trouble." explained Bostock "Apparently, they've found some kind of Eggman weapon that's been dormant for months on end and they want to destroy it but something keeps lurking in the canyons and killing Thomas Tiger's men before they can get through the canyons to it."

"That's terrible!" cried Mandy in alarm "Who could possibly be doing that to them?"

"They don't know." said Bostock gravely "But they need some assistance and they're running out of men because of that canyon monster. They're hoping to get a hold of the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters but they're otherwise engaged apparently*** so you two are the only ones available so would you care to help the Megapolis Royal Fighters?"

"I say yes without a moment's hesitation!" declared Mandy hotly "We helped save Grand Metropolis so we're gonna help save Megapolis!"

"Um…Mandy? Are you sure about that?" asked Wilson nervously "I mean I'm all for helping R.F.S. groups but…what if this so-called "canyon monster" gets us too?"

"Oh please Wilson, we've dealt with threats worse then a silly little creature lurking in the canyons, we'll be alright." scoffed Mandy "I do hope you're not gonna chicken out on me or I'll leave you behind and you can stay here until I come back."

"On second thoughts…let's do it to it!" declared Wilson "Let's go!"

"Please don't quote blue dude Wilson." said Mandy with a teasing smirk on her face "It's better when he does it."

"Sorry." said Wilson, blushing bright red.

"Bostock, tell Field Marshal Thomas we're on our way." said Mandy

"Megapolis is in good hands now."

"No problem Ma'am." said Bostock "Good luck you two. I have a heavy feeling you'll need a lot of it."

"Luck? Phbbt, an Eggman weapon that's being guarded by a canyon monster?" sniffed Mandy as if the whole scenario sounded ridiculous to her "We'll be done by dinner! We don't need any luck for this!"

"Remind yourself never to let her hang out with Sonic again." Wilson muttered to himself "She's beginning to sound a lot like HIM now."

With that said, Wilson and Mandy climbed into Mandy's hover-car and Mandy started it up. The car rose up off the ground and hovered away from the graveyard and off down the road to the end of Grand Metropolis. Bostock waved them goodbye as they pulled away from the city and set courses for Megapolis. He prayed for them that the supposed canyon monster wouldn't kill them like it killed Thomas's men…

Meanwhile, Marik the Martian had left the canyons behind and he dusted his hands off, satisfied with himself that he'd just killed two more men that had been sent to destroy the Egg-Blaster he'd found on his travels. The Egg-Blaster was a huge behemoth of a weapon. The blaster was a strange, unique design with heavy, strong supporting clamps that held it up, a cannon barrel large enough for a train to use as a tunnel and it stood about fifty feet above the ground. It was silver in colour with warning stripes around the clamps. The operating base and control systems were housed at the bottom of the laser. Marik went inside and sat down in the comfy chair that sat in front of the control desk. There were hundreds of controls at the ready and Marik had no idea how to work the blaster. He had tried to use the controls but he couldn't work the blaster because the control panel was locked and only Dr. Eggman could use it. But Marik didn't care. He was hoping to hack into the system and break the lock on the control panel so he could work the blaster and use it to destroy Mobius once and for all. Right now, he wasn't in the mood for trying to break the lock, he was just going to sit back

and rest for a while. He lay back in the chair and sighed happily to himself.

"Another good day of killing." sighed Marik "That's twelve victims I've killed this week. Hopefully those stupid Royal Fighters will stop sending people to try and destroy this weapon before I can use it. But knowing them, they'll just get Sonic the Hedgehog to save the day again and he'll arrive and try to kick my backside in so the Royal Fighters can destroy it. Well, I'll just keep up my canyon monster act and catch Sonic by surprise so not even he will stop me now. I'm still amazed as to how I found this thing in the first place…" he added as he thought back to two days ago…

Two days ago…

Marik the Martian trudged miserably through the desert plains of Megapolis, heading in no particular direction as he had nowhere to go. Silver the Hedgehog had recently disabled his jet shoes during the Sol Emerald showdown**** so he was forced to walk and run to places as he couldn't use his jet shoes to make his journeys shorter. Marik was not used to walking properly without being able to use his jet shoes to slide across the landscape and make long treks in a matter of minutes. He was moaning like there was no tomorrow to himself.

"What I wouldn't give to be able to use my jet shoes again!" whined Marik as he scuffed his feet "Curse that stupid psychic silver freak for disabling them while I was knocked out! When I find out where he lives, I'll go over there and slaughter him in a very grisly fashion for this indignity! I should not be forced to make long treks like this without my jet shoes! My legs need a rest and I can't do so because I can't use my jets to slide across the landscape like I usually…"

His voice was cut off as he noticed something strange in the distance. He peered at it. What was it? It looked a bit like a weapon. He had to get a closer look. Marik ran over to the thing he noticed in the distance, running like a normal person of course as he didn't have his jet shoes. He ran and he ran until he finally reached the place he spotted in the distance. He couldn't believe what he was

looking at as he reached it. The thing he's spotted in the distance was a giant laser. This was a laser called the Egg-Blaster. After Bunnie Rabbot joined the Megapolis Royal Fighters and helped them to destroy his forces in Megapolis, the weapon had been abandoned before it could ever be used. It's construction had been finished literally minutes before Eggman's hold over Megapolis was released and it had just been sitting there doing absolutely nothing but standing there looking good. Nobody knew about it, not even Dr. Eggman as his troops here had built it without his authorization and without him even knowing about it. Marik's face widened at the mere sight of this thing. It looked like a weapon of mass destruction and he wanted to use it.

"Look at that!" he cried "What a glorious looking weapon this is! I wonder who built it? No matter, it's mine now and I'm going to use it to vaporize this sorry excuse for a planet! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

And with that he ran inside and prepared to use it to end Mobius once and for all…

Now…

"…and yet I'm unable to use it!" muttered Marik, pounding the controls "All because it belongs to Dr. Eggman and it's locked so only HE can use it!"

He punched a button angrily only to earn a response from the computer monitors.

THIS SYSTEM IS LOCKED AND CAN ONLY BE ACCSESSED BY A MEMBER OF THE EGGMAN EMPIRE. THIS IS DR. EGGMAN'S MACHINE AND IT IS FOR HIM TO USE ONLY.

He got that response every time he tried a control on the panel. Marik just fumed angrily and he turned his back on the machine in temper.

"No matter, I'll hack into the system somehow and get this thing to work and then I can get my revenge on Mobius once and for all!"

Marik bellowed more to himself then anybody "But until then, I have to protect it from those Royal Fighters before they can destroy it."

Then suddenly, the radar on the control panel started beeping and Marik peered at it quickly. The radar was showing Mandy's car and it was coming towards the Megapolis camp but Marik didn't know what it was. He had a feeling it was more Royal Fighters attempting to brave the canyons and destroy his precious weapon. Marik just grinned happily to himself.

"Oh good, more flesh to sink my claws into!" he said wickedly to himself "I do hope it's someone I know this time around, therefore making this kill all the more special! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Marik left the operating base and headed back into the Mega Canyons so he could kill these supposed new arrivals that were likely going to brave the canyons next and try to destroy the Egg-Blaster. Marik didn't care how many people he killed as long as it would eventually result in the R.F.S. giving up on the mission and leaving him in peace to hack into the blaster's system at last…

Meanwhile, Wilson and Mandy had finally arrived at Megapolis after a nice long drive there. Mandy's hover-car pulled up into the camp and Mandy put the handbrake on and shut the car down. The car settled down flat on the ground and Wilson and Mandy climbed out of the car to meet Thomas and his troops. They were hit by a whiff of warm air as they suddenly realized how much warmer Megapolis was in comparison to Grand Metropolis, which had pretty mild weather most of the time. Wilson and Mandy wondered into the camp, earning some "hellos" and "hi there's" from the Royal Fighters here. Wilson and Mandy just waved back to them and they stood to attention in front of Thomas Tiger, who was waiting for them with a hearty grin on his face. The tiger looked very pleased to see them. Wilson and Mandy saluted to the Field Marshal respectfully and Thomas saluted back to them.

"Royal Fighters Wilson the Dog and Mandy Mouse reporting for duty sir." said Wilson in his best manner.

"We're here about your canyon problem." explained Mandy "General Bostock gave us your message after he received it."

"That's excellent." said Thomas brightly "Although I was kind of hoping for Sonic the Hedgehog to be the one to help us."

"The other members of our team are occupied right now sir." said Mandy "We were the only free ones available for you. Besides, we're plenty good enough for this task so you needn't be disappointed that you have us."

"I never said I was." said Thomas "I've heard good things about you two from General Bostock so I can expect you two will be able to rid us of the canyon monster."

"Thomas, we've managed to stop a giant drill and we've helped blue dude on his adventures plenty of times." said Mandy "We even helped Bostock and Mortimer storm Robotropolis and blow up his communication towers***** so a monster lurking in the canyons will be a walk in the park for us."

"I doubt that Mandy dear." said Bostock gravely "I've lost twelve men in the last two days, the most recent casualties being a couple of my best men so you'll have to be vigilant in the Mega Canyons."

"T-t-twelve casualties in two days?" shrieked Wilson, his tail drooping down between his legs much like how a natural dog does that when it's scared "This monster sounds worse then I thought it was going to be!"

Even Mandy seemed to be a little nervous about the whole thing now after hearing such news. She hadn't expected the monster to be as bad as this. Maybe she was thinking too highly of herself for this kind of mission and she underestimated the canyon monster. Nevertheless, Mandy was not going to let a monster lurking in the canyons continue to slaughter innocent men any longer. The monster had killed its last victim today and she was going to put it down permanently.

"I'll take your advice to heart and be extra careful sir." said Mandy slowly "This canyon monster sounds like something to be reckoned

with."

"It is my dear." said Thomas "It kills with swift ruthlessness and doesn't seem to show any mercy as judging by the grisly remains of its victims, it just unleashes hell on them and finishes them off incredibly quickly."

"It sounds like some savage animal." said Wilson "It's definitely not Eggman's doing as not even he is that savage."

"Maybe so Wilson but didn't you stop to think that maybe Eggman has some kind of guard bot patrolling the canyons in order to make sure no one can get to his weapon?" noted Mandy "And maybe it's a brutal machine that kills swiftly and mercilessly?"

"That's a good point." said Wilson "Speaking of the weapon, what is it and what does it do?"

"The weapon is a giant cannon called "Egg-Blaster"." explained Thomas "My best spy found it sitting there, dormant and abandoned at the end of the Mega-Canyons and it looks like it could destroy the planet should it fire so we're trying to destroy it."

"Unfortunately, the canyon monster keeps killing our men before they can get to it." said Kiara who came up beside Thomas "It must be some kind of guard working for Dr. Eggman. Only a guard working for Eggman would protect such valuable Eggman weaponry."

"I agree with you cheetah girl." said Mandy "What's your name by the way and are you new? I've not seen you before."

"My name's Kiara and I am new." said Kiara "I've trained to become a Royal Fighter and I just finished my training last week. I'm the messenger woman but I am a capable fighter too so don't think I'm only good at delivering letters to the Field Marshal."

"I'm not surprised you're a keen fighter Kiara." said Mandy "Cheetahs are usually keen fighters and their speed makes them all the more powerful and harder to get a hold of. I can see you doing well in battle easily."

"Thank you." said Kiara, flattered by Mandy's comment "So you two, are you willing to brave the canyons and see if you can get rid of the canyon monster?"

"I certainly am." said Mandy "I am dedicated to my duty and I never turn down people who cry for help."

"I um…I'm in too." said Wilson nervously "That creature will not survive my spinning blade weapon."

He pulled the capsule off his belt and deployed its two blades. Thomas and Kiara were amazed at the fact Wilson actually owned a spinning blade weapon, a weapon that not many people were able to use.

"That's so cool! You can use a spinning blade weapon?" cried Kiara excitedly "I've been trying forever to use that and I've fared no better then the others who've tried!"

"Thank you." said Wilson, blushing slightly at Kiara's comments.

"Well, with a magnanimous weapon like that, the canyon monster's as good as dead." said Thomas brightly "However, you may need some kind of defence to aid you in battle. Kiara, fetch these two a shield each please. And get Mandy a weapon too as she seems to be unequipped with one."

"Yes Field Marshal." said Kiara, zipping off to the weapon's tent to fetch a pair of shields and a weapon for Mandy to use.

The cheetah wasn't gone for long as she was fast at most things she did, even fetching things. In a matter of seconds, Kiara returned with a shield each for Wilson and Mandy and she gave Mandy a standard sniper rifle with a shiny chrome barrel that fired lasers. Mandy took the weapon and she loaded it.

"I've always been fond of snipers." she said "Thanks Kiara."

"No problem Mandy." said Kiara happily "Please be careful in those canyons though. We don't wanna have to phone Castle Acorn back at Mobotropolis and tell them they're gonna be two members short in their ranks."

"Don't worry about us Kiara." said Mandy, attaching the shield onto her arm "We can handle this no problem. You ready for this cute stuff?" she asked Wilson, who was just slipping his shield on.

"Um…yeah." said Wilson although secretly, he was still petrified over this whole scenario "Sure, I'm ready whenever you are Mandy."

"That's brilliant to know." said Mandy, playfully stroking his head to make Wilson giggle "Field Marshal Thomas, we're ready to go. We'll be back the moment we've killed the creature."

"Alright then." said Thomas "Just make sure you don't lose your heads out there for heaven's sake. We've had twelve casualties this week, we don't want it to increase to fourteen so suddenly."

"Thomas, that creature will have to worry about losing its head." said Mandy cockily "We've got this. See you soon."

"Same to you." said Thomas as Wilson and Mandy set off to the Mega-Canyons to kill the creature.

They could already see where the canyons were as they were in plain sight even from the camp's placement so they didn't need directions at all. Wilson and Mandy walked off to the canyons with their weapons in hand and Thomas stood there, watching them go with a worried expression on his face. Kiara stood beside him and watched them go too.

"Do you think they'll survive the canyon monster?" asked Kiara.

"I have faith in them but I also worry for them at the same time." said Thomas slowly and quietly "They may have experience but so did the twelve chaps that have fallen this week and they were killed. I sincerely hope these two don't end up having the same fate."

Unfortunately for Thomas, Wilson and Mandy were going to have one heck of a life and death situation on their hands and it wasn't going to end pleasantly for them at all…

Wilson and Mandy had reached the Mega-Canyons at last and they

began to wonder through them, keeping all of their senses alert and their weapons ready. It had suddenly occurred to the courageous mouse that the canyons looked slightly more eerie when you actually walk through them. The cliff tops loomed above the Royal Fighter pair like humongous, stone giants and the canyon walls had eerie looking groves and crevices in them that made Wilson feel more nervous then he already was and Mandy feel considerably less brave but the mouse wasn't going to let some silly canyon bother her so easily. She tried to ignore the walls and she kept on the look out for the so-called "canyon monster". The monster had clearly picked a good place to hang out in as the Mega Canyons did have a lot of places to hide in and the crevices were shaped in eerie fashions. Some looked like big evil smiles and glaring eyes, some were jagged and fashioned in a shape of a mouth full of teeth. And Mandy could swear that there was a rock sculpture on the cliffs shaped like a gargoyle just staring down at them darkly with its claws bared. They may as well have called it "Hell's Canyon" rather then the Mega-Canyons. Despite her dedication to duty, Mandy couldn't help but feel nervous about the whole thing.

"You know what Wilson, when you actually walk through these canyons, they appear a lot creepier then you'd think don't they?" said Mandy, her ears drooping against her head nervously "I feel like there's eyes everywhere watching our every step due to the crevices on the walls that give off a creepy look."

"I can see why they called them the Mega-Canyons." shivered Wilson, his spinning blade shaking in his hands "They're mega scary canyons!"

"Oh Wilson, please don't tell me you're seriously terrified of some creepy crevices on a wall of rock are you?" moaned Mandy in annoyance "They maybe a little freaky but they can't be that bad!"

"I'm…I am not." claimed Wilson quickly "I was…just making a joke." he lied.

"Well cute stuff, if you're going to make a joke then try harder." muttered Mandy "That one certainly didn't sound like a joke. It sounded more like you freaking out."

Wilson just blushed red. He hated making a fool out of himself in front of Mandy; it made him feel foolish and like Mandy was annoyed by him and he hated the idea of annoying people so he tried hard not to get on Mandy's nerves. As the two continued through the canyons, Wilson looked around and stared at the cliff tops and walls to see if he could spot the canyon monster anywhere. The canyons were pretty long so they had quite a while to go before they reached the end of them. Everything seemed quiet so far. Perhaps…a little too quiet. Perhaps…eerily quit. Wilson didn't like it when it was eerily quiet on a mission; it was never a good sign especially if you were looking for somebody. The somebody you were looking for could be biding his time and waiting to strike, using the quietness of the scenery to his advantage to ensure their guard was lowered. Wilson learnt that the hard way in his childhood when bullies used that trick against him and then pounced on him so they could torment him about his fur colour so eerily quiet scenes made him feel very, very nervous.

"Uh, Mandy?" asked Wilson.

"Ugh, yes Wilson?" groaned Mandy in annoyance, stopping and turning around to face him.

"Doesn't the quietness of the canyons distract you a little?" he asked "Like maybe, it's too quiet for comfort and the monster is lying in wait for us, hoping that the quietness will fool us into thinking it's safe and then he'll strike us?"

"I did consider that possibility Wilson." said Mandy "That's why my excellent ears are on duty. I'm keeping them super alert for any noise whatsoever, even someone moving a foot ever so gently on the rocky ground so there's no need to worry. That monster can be quiet all it wants; I'm not lowering my guard until I reach the end of the canyons."

"Well that's a relief." said Wilson "I think I'll do just the same. That monster won't fool us."

Mandy nodded agreeably and continued on through the canyons with her sniper at the ready. Wilson followed closely behind with his ears pricked and on the alert. On the cliff tops just above their heads

however, Marik the Martian was strolling by and looking out for the new recruits that had arrived to Megapolis and he spotted Wilson and Mandy strolling through the canyons with weapons in hand. Marik quietly bent down onto his knees and he stared down at the ground below him. He saw Wilson and Mandy's faces and he recognized them both instantly. He resisted the urge to blurt out wildly and he kept himself under control. He stared at Wilson and Mandy and he mused to himself.

"Well, well, well. It appears the new arrivals are two of Sonic's infernal friends." he muttered to himself "I recognize them both, especially the dog as he bit my arm****** and left these horrendous scars on it for life." he grumbled, rolling up his sleeve and looking bitterly at the bite marks that Wilson left on the lower part of his arm. These were scars that would never heal and Marik was quite mad to have them. He hated scars, he felt like they obscured his appearance. At least his sleeve would hide them to prevent himself from being embarrassed by them.

"As for the mouse, I haven't seen much of her but I do remember her foot curiously felt like metal when she kicked me on that pirate ship." mused Marik "She and the dog seem to favour one another as they're mostly together. Well, in that case I'll pick them off one by one just so one of them can grieve the loss of their friend for my amusement and then I'll off the other too."

He then stood up on all fours and he aimed his metal claws down at the ground where Wilson and Mandy were walking. Marik then decided to move to a location so that he sun was shining behind him, obscuring his appearance and making it harder to spot him as the sunlight will prevent them from seeing him properly. Electricity crackled between his fingers as he prepared to use them to electrocute them both. However, Mandy's excellent hearing picked up the electricity crackles and she raised her sniper up at the cliffs. Wilson jumped and he raised his weapon too.

"What's up Mandy?" he gasped.

"I thought I heard the curious sound of electricity crackling." mused Mandy "I bet the canyon monster is an Eggman robot with electrical abilities of some kind. No one on Mobius I know other then the

chipmunk twins from Nekronopolis have electric powers."

Marik was pleased to see that the two seemed to be thinking he was something else. That would make him harder to track down and no one would know it was him. Marik then aimed his metal claws at Wilson and Mandy and fired a jolt of electricity at them. Mandy spotted it just in time and she raised the shield to block the attack. Wilson yelped in a typical frightened dog manner and he began searching around for the monster madly with his blade at the ready.

"Eek! The monster's attacking us!" screeched Wilson "Where is it?"

"I don't know." said Mandy, pointing her sniper at the cliffs and waiting to fire "I can't see anything but it's definitely an Eggman robot. Nobody else I know has electrical attacks. It would make sense for it to be an Eggman robot as the Megapolis Royal Fighters are trying to destroy an Eggman weapon."

"In that case, I'll just slice it in half!" declared Wilson, throwing his spinning blade weapon at what he thought was the monster as he saw a shadowy figure on the cliff tops.

But the shadowy figure was really just a funny shaped rock on the cliff tops and the spinning blade weapon just sliced it in half. The top half of the rock fell down onto the ground and smashed into pebbles. Wilson's weapon boomeranged back to him and he caught it in his hands. Marik jumped onto another cliff top and he fired a jolt of electricity at Mandy. Mandy deflected the blow with her shield and began firing her sniper rapidly at the cliff tops. The rifle belted out several laser blots and they tore through the tops of the cliffs, sending pebbles and stones flying everywhere. Marik effortlessly dodged the attacks and he fired another jolt of electricity at Mandy. Mandy blocked it with the shield and she continued to fire rapidly at Marik.

"Quit playing the yellow-livered coward and get down here!" yelled Mandy "Face us like a real monster you demon!"

Marik just continued firing more jolts at Mandy and he actually managed to hit her on the shoulder with an electric jolt. The resulting attack left Mandy's shoulder with a pit of a burn and she yelped in

pain. As for Wilson, he backed away from the fight scene, hoping to get a good view of Marik so he could throw his spinning blade at him. He backed up to a cave entrance however and he decided that this distance was good enough. He threw his spinning blade at Marik but Marik saw the blade coming and he jumped out of the way. The blade just boomeranged back to Wilson and he caught it in his hands. Marik then proceeded to swipe his arms and send a wave of energy hurling towards the top of the cave entrance. The wave struck the cave and left heavy cracks above the entrance. The resulting attack caused some of the entrance to cave in and a rockslide began to start! Rocks and stones rained down from above the entrance and onto the ground below. Wilson noticed that the cave entrance was beginning to fall down over him. He yelped in terror and he ran into the cave in order to avoid the rockslide but a rather heavy rock landed on his back and knocked him over. He lay on the ground, unconscious and surrounded by rocks. The rockslide continued to pile down onto the ground and Mandy turned her head around to see what was happening. Rocks fell from the top of the cave entrance and covered the entrance, forming a pile of rocks that blocked the entrance and prevented anyone from getting in or out of the cave. She ran over to the cave just as the rockslide finished falling down and blocking the entrance and she noticed something sticking out from the remains. It was Wilson's spinning blade. Mandy pulled it out of the remains and she stared at it in horror whereas Marik held back and waited to see what was going to happen. Wilson's blade was heavily bent and dented and just see the weapon under the remains made Mandy feel sick all over. Wilson must have been near the wave when Marik started the rockslide and if Wilson's weapon was crushed then…Wilson must be dead! The mouse began to feel sick with horror. She shook furiously and her eyes began to well up with tears.

"Oh no!" she gasped "No! Not…not my cute little…Wilson! Not him! Anything but him!"

She threw the weapon down onto the ground and tried to dig through the rock pile but there were far too many rocks to dig through and many of them were too heavy to move. That sealed it for her. If the rock pile was too big and heavy to dig through then Wilson was easily dead. The canyon monster had killed her

boyfriend with a rockslide and now she was going to have to deal with another loss in her life. First her sister, now her boyfriend.

"NOOOO!" howled Mandy, breaking down in rainfalls and pounding the rocks in agony. Her tears splashed down on the fallen rocks as she sobbed her poor little heart out.

"Oh Wilson! I'm so sorry!" she wailed "I didn't realize where you were and…now I'm too late to save you! How am I going to explain this to my friends back home?"

She then picked up her deceased boyfriend's weapon and ran off back to the Megapolis canyons, not wanting to get killed by the monster too. She continued to sob as she legged it out of the Mega-Canyons. Marik's face widened into a very creepy and sinister grin as he watched the heartbroken mouse run for her life out of the canyons and back to the Megapolis camp.

"I probably should kill the mouse too." said Marik "But she's retreating from her mission and leaving the weapon alone. Hopefully once she tells those Royal Fighters what's just happened, they'll give up on trying to destroy my weapon. Then I can try and hack into it and once I do, the end of Mobius will come at last!"

He then bellowed with loud grating laughter that echoed through the canyons like a haunting, ghoulish laugh that sounded like it was coming from the pits of hell itself. The Megapolis Royal Fighters will eventually give up trying to destroy the Egg Blaster weapon he'd found and once he finally managed to get it to work for him, he'll use it and destroy the planet with it. Mobius' doom was ascertain right now…

Footnotes:

***See Arc 1**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 83**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 88-89 to find out why**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 87**

******* See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 52-53**

******** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 38**

Wilson? Are you...dead? Looks like Mandy's got more pain to go through then before! Is Wilson dead? And will Marik get to use the weapon to destroy Mobius? Find out next time...Reviews are welcome.

Pain in Megapolis 2

Arc 10: Pain in Megapolis

Takes place during Stories 88-90 in Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius

Part 2: Revenge Strikes At The Worst Of Moments

The Megapolis Royal Fighter's camp was unusually quiet as of now. That was because the whole camp was on tenterhooks about Wilson the Dog and Mandy Mouse, two members of the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters who came to help them with their monster problem. The two had bravely ventured into the Mega-Canyons to deal with the hidden beast (which as you know, is Marik the Martian) and they hadn't heard anything from them since they left. The leader of the Megapolis Royal Fighters, Field Marshal Thomas Tiger had been sitting in his tent and waiting for the two to report something to him or come back with some news. He'd just been sitting there for minutes on end with thousands of knots tied in his gut. Twelve men had been killed by Marik and he was sincerely hoping it wouldn't end up increasing to fourteen. The tiger could do nothing more then just sit and wait. He sat as still as a statue. So still in fact even his heart didn't appear to be moving. The tiger really was concerned about the whole scenario and he really hoped that things were going to go well today and Wilson and Mandy were going to kill the canyon monster, therefore allowing his group to venture through the canyons and destroy a dormant Eggman weapon, the Egg Blaster, before anyone could use it, especially Dr. Eggman if he discovered the weapon and decided to us it. Then suddenly, Thomas's wait appeared to be over at last as his messenger woman Kiara the Cheetah burst into his tent looking frantic. The tiger jumped onto his feet and prepared himself for Kiara's news.

"Field Marshal!" blustered Kiara, her hair waving around crazily as she spoke frantically "Mandy Mouse is coming back to our camp but Wilson's not with her! I think something terrible may have

happened!"

"Mandy's coming back but Wilson isn't?" mused Thomas "We'd best find out what's been going on and quick. Let's meet her Kiara."

Thomas and Kiara both darted out of the tent and ran over to the edge of the camp. They stopped dead in their tracks when they saw Mandy running to the camp as fast as she possibly could. Her furry cheeks were stained and wet from the tears she'd been shedding and she was carrying something in her hands. Thomas had a feeling he knew what it was as the mouse finally reached them and stopped dead in her tracks. She panted heavily and she wiped her still crying eyes dry for a moment. She looked absolutely devastated and Thomas had a bad feeling on why she looked so shattered.

"Mandy dear, whatever is the matter?" asked Thomas "Why have you come back?"

"Where's your partner?" asked Kiara worriedly "Has Wilson been…?"

"Yes." puffed Mandy, showing the two Royal Fighters Wilson's bent and dented spinning blade weapon, the dents caused by the earlier rock slide "Me and Wilson were out searching for the creature. The creature attacked us. It caused a rockslide and…and…Wilson got… caught up in it! I don't think he'll have survived that! Wilson's dead! The canyon monster killed him!"

She then dropped the weapon on the ground and threw her arms around Thomas Tiger while wailing like crazy once again. Thomas couldn't believe his ears. The two had barely been in the canyon for more then a few minutes and Wilson gets killed by a rockslide caused by the creature! Was there anyone who could stand to that monster at all? Thomas put an arm around Mandy and patted her back pityingly as the heartbroken mouse cried into his uniform, unintentionally staining it with her tears. Thomas knew about Wilson and Mandy's love for one another due to the fact he's kept updated on members of the R.F.S. and he could feel Mandy's pain. As for Kiara, she picked up Wilson's spinning blade weapon and her face dropped into a sad expression. Help had arrived for the Megapolis Royal Fighters and yet, it wasn't enough. Now the Mobotropolis

Royal Fighters had lost a member of their team and Thomas would have to be the one to explain it all, which wasn't going to be an easy task at all.

"The canyon monster…killed Wilson?" said Kiara quietly "That's terrible! Just…terrible!"

"I know!" sobbed Mandy "Wilson was everything to me and now he's gone along with my sister! Why is my life constantly filled with pain and suffering? Why? Why?"

"Fate can be very unfair to some individuals Mandy." said Thomas grimly "You happen to be one of the unfortunate ones my dear. I know life isn't fair but there's nothing we can do about it. Poor Wilson has lost his life, making him the thirteenth casualty this week. We're so sorry we dragged you two into this. We shouldn't have gotten you involved and therefore, Wilson would still be alive so all this is our fault."

"No, no it's not." sniffed Mandy "Me and Wilson are Royal Fighters, we can't just ignore a call for help. You called for help and we answered it. It's just unfortunate we couldn't help you as much as we could have and Wilson unfortunately happened to get killed so don't put grief on yourself Thomas. It wasn't your fault this happened."

"Maybe so." said Thomas "But I'm still holding responsibilities for this tragedy as I brought it upon you two by asking you to come here to help us. If you want Mandy, you can have a moment to yourself in my tent. I'm guessing you'll be wanting some alone time right now."

"I am sir." said Mandy, wiping away a tear "With Wilson dead, I don't feel like seeing anybody right now."

She then walked off and went into Thomas Tiger's tent to have a moment to herself. The moment she wandered into the tent, she broke down in tears again. Wilson's death really was devastating to her, especially as the dog was the love of her life and he meant the whole world to her so she'd be crying for a while now. Kiara could hear the heartbroken mouse crying rainfalls from inside the tent despite the fact she was standing a considerable distance from it due to her good hearing. Kiara hated hearing people cry and she felt

deeply sorry for poor Mandy despite the fact the two had only just met each other. The cheetah never liked it when people lost their loved ones and right now, she had this sudden urge to avenge the fallen Wilson even though she'd only just met him too. Not to mention, she was getting sick of the canyon monster killing anybody that dared to venture into them so she decided she was going to fight the monster herself. After all, she did have fighting skills as well as great speed and messenger skills. Her speed would make it hard for the canyon monster to catch her and she'd be able to strike swiftly and powerfully on the monster. Kiara knew what had to be done. The canyon monster would have to be dealt with once and for all. She put down Wilson's broken weapon and she turned to face Thomas Tiger.

"Sir, may I have some laser cuffs please?" she asked politely.

"Certainly Kiara dear." said Thomas, giving Kiara a laser cuff sphere from out of a pouch on his belt "But why do you want them anyway?"

"Because I am going into the Mega-Canyons to face the monster and defeat it once and for all." said Kiara with an expression not common for the cheetah "That thing has killed its last victim today."

"Kiara young lady, you are not going into those canyons!" barked Thomas sternly "We've lost twelve men and a member of the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters in two days, some of them being some of my most skilled men in the service, I am not about to let you join the body count so shortly after joining the service!"

"So what should I do then?" demanded Kiara angrily "Just stand around and hope that thing goes away? It's clearly in the canyons to defend the Egg-Blaster weapon and it's defending it for a reason! So ethier it can use it to devastating effect or so Eggman can use it! If we don't stop that thing and destroy the weapon, Eggman may find out he has a dormant weapon under his nose and he'll use it to wipe the entire R.F.S. off the map! The only way we're gonna destroy that weapon is if we get through the canyons and defeat the monster and I'm willing to risk my life for it!"

"Well I'm not willing to let such a young woman lose her life before it

can really begin!" snapped Thomas "My best men can't stop that thing so you'll have no chance against it Kiara!"

"I will Thomas sir!" retorted Kiara "I'm almost as fast as Sonic the Hedgehog and I'm a keen fighter! I'll be too fast for that thing and I'll floor it in ten seconds flat!"

"And what if that thing is equally as fast as you are?" noted Thomas "Or what if it's stronger then you are and your speed isn't enough to stop it?"

"We won't find out if you won't let me try sir!" cried Kiara "Please, for all our fallen men, for Mandy's boyfriend! Let me fight the creature!"

"Absolutely not!" yelled Thomas "I am forbidding you to leave this camp and if you dare to leave the camp and go anywhere near the Mega-Canyons, I'll have you court-martialled for disobeying orders!"

"What?" squealed Kiara "You're gonna court-martial me for trying to help the R.F.S.? Isn't that what I signed up for? To help others and fight evil and now you want me to do nothing? Is there something I'm missing here?"

"There isn't dear Kiara, I just don't want you to risk your life and fight that monster!" snapped Thomas "You may be willing to risk your life, but I'm not willing to lose another member after losing twelve already this week! Now stand down Kiara and forget about the mission! We'll think of a plan that will guarantee the monster's elimination."

Kiara scowled at Thomas angrily. The cheetah was bubbling with rage and right now, she wanted to deck the Field Marshal for refusing to let her try and stop the canyon monster. She really wanted to help out and Thomas was just holding her back for "safety reasons". Well Kiara didn't care about what Thomas had to say. She had a very stubborn streak in her veins and she'd willingly disobey orders if it meant doing the right thing. Kiara looked back up at Thomas and she pouted at him.

"I will not stand down." she said "I'm going in the canyons to stop that thing and you cannot stop me sir. I'm sorry I have to do this but it has to be done."

With that said, she zipped off at normal cheetah speed and left the bewildered Thomas Tiger to just stand there and watch her run away to the Mega-Canyons. He couldn't stop the cheetah now she'd just run off, she was much too fast for the tiger. Nothing could catch a cheetah after all.

"Kiara!" he bellowed out to her "You get back here right now young lady! Kiara! KIARA!"

The cheetah blatantly ignored the Field Marshal and continued running off to the Mega-Canyons. Thomas could only stand there and helplessly watch as his messenger woman ran off and headed to the canyons where the killer creature lurked and struck whenever his men went through them. As for Mandy, she'd heard Thomas and Kiara arguing with one another and the moment she heard Thomas calling for Kiara to come back, she instantly managed to work out the cheetah had just blatantly disobeyed Thomas's orders and left for the canyons. Mandy burst out of the tent and ran up to Thomas, who was still staring at the horizon as Kiara ran off. A big cloud of dust trialling behind her as she ran indicated where she was.

"She hasn't…has she?" squeaked Mandy nervously.

"She has." muttered Thomas "Kiara's just deliberately disobeyed me and has left to fight the monster. Lord be on her side."

"You can't just let her get away!" shrieked Mandy "She'll be killed! Me and Wilson are veteran fighters and Kiara's a rookie! She won't have a chance against that creature!"

"She may do." said Thomas "She is speedy just like all cheetahs are and she is quite the fighter, even though she has yet to be engaged in a fight. She did train very callously after all and could beat Barkley the Dingo, one of my best men, in a training match. But I still fear for the dear child. She's still young and only seventeen and she's only just recently completed her training. She may not farewell in this battle."

"I do hope she makes it out alive." said Mandy with worry evident in her voice "Unlike…my cute little Wilson…"

She tried to keep in the tears that prepared to fall again. Thomas just looked at the poor mouse and wore the same worried expression she had right now.

"I hope little Kiara makes it out alive too." said Thomas "I don't want to use such a sweet young fighter like her so shortly after completing her training."

The next few minutes were going to be madly worrying for the Field Marshal as he waited for Kiara to return with the monster in hand. That is, if she was going to come back at all…

Back at the Egg-Blaster, Marik had returned to the weapon and he was wallowing in his most recent success. He'd just killed Wilson the Dog and scared off Mandy Mouse so they weren't going to try and destroy the weapon. He'd been sitting in the chair and gloating for the universe to himself.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" he cackled to himself as he spun around gleefully in the chair "I killed one of Sonic's friends! I can just imagine the look on his face when he finds out I killed one of the members of his primitive group of playschool pals! Oh ho, ho, ho, ha, ha, ha! I bet with a loss that heavy, that Royal Fighter camp will stop trying to destroy my weapon! If not, then I'll just march over to the camp itself and tear it apart, then I'll get no more interruptions."

He then swivelled the chair around to the screen on the control panel and he thought to himself as he observed the screen and the controls.

"Now I've just gotten rid of the dog and made the mouse run away, I'll just take a moment to myself and try to hack into this thing." he said to himself "But where do I start? This is all complex machinery right here, where do I start on this?"

Marik drummed his fingers on the control panel and began wondering to himself on how he was going to hack into the weapon's controls and be able to break Eggman's lock on it so he could use it. He didn't know where to start and he didn't want to

break anything as he could just ruin the entire weapon right there just by ripping things apart. Just as Marik began pondering to himself, the screen bleeped with another warning. Marik growled in such fury, he almost head butted the control pad in anger but he refrained from doing so and thumped the control panel furiously instead.

"Not more people bothering me!" growled Marik "How many men do I have to kill until they leave me alone?"

He peered at the screen and saw a dot on it that was heading to an icon shaped like the canyons. It was moving at a pretty great speed though, something that the Martian didn't like and he began to grow nervous.

"Someone's coming to the canyons and its moving fast." he said to himself "It's not Sonic the Hedgehog is it? Well if it is then I'll happily go down to the canyons and remove his heart so I can keep it as a trophy. I may not be able to use my jet shoes to gain the advantage," he glared at his feet in annoyance "But speed isn't everything. I'm stronger then he is so I'll vanquish him easily, especially as he's alone right now, that means no annoying interference from his friends that can hinder me."

He stood up from the chair and left the weapon base once again. Having to get up constantly to deal with some Royal Fighters hoping to destroy the weapon was beginning to aggravate the Martian. Once he dealt with this attacker, he was going to take it upon himself to wreck the entire camp and slaughter the campers so he could finally have some peace and try to hack into the weapon.

"Those Royal Fighters are impetuous to say the least." muttered Marik "Hopefully when I destroy the camp, they'll quit bothering me and give me a moment to study the weapon and hack into it."

He headed to the canyons and prepared to put up his canyon monster act once again. This lone fighter was in for an hour of hell once he attacked…

Kiara slowed down her incredibly fast sprint to a steady walk and she wondered through the Mega-Canyons, her senses kept on the alert for the monster. She looked all around her, taking note of the sinister and eerie looking crevices on the walls, the cave entrances, the cliff tops and the strange structures that stood eerily on them like sinister gargoyles as she saw them. The monster could be hiding in any of them and if Kiara took note of them, she'd have some idea on where to look for it. The quietness of the canyons made her feel a little nervous though. That combined with the eerie crevices and grooves in the wall that made you feel like there were eyes everywhere watching you made the cheetah feel very uncomfortable as she wondered through the canyons and kept all her senses alert for the sign of danger. At least the sun was out and keeping the canyons alight, they would have been worse to walk through at night as they would look even creepier.

"Ooooh…" she shivered to herself as a cold chill ran up her spine "This place is a lot creepier when you go in yourself. No wonder the monster hides here. It strikes fear into the hearts of his victims and then he strikes them as they shiver nervously at the walls of this canyon. Well I'm not going to let a creepy canyon hinder my mission."

Despite what she'd just told herself, she was secretly wishing she had someone behind her to dampen her fears. Maybe Thomas Tiger or one of his men. Speaking of Thomas, Kiara couldn't help but wonder what the tiger was going to do to her when she came back to the camp with the monster in hand.

"I hope Thomas won't court-martial me for this." said Kiara worriedly, hugging herself "I know it was wrong for me to disobey him like this but…but I wanna do the right thing and help my friends in the camp by getting rid of a sinister creature that stalks them and kills them before they can get through them and destroy the weapon. Still, maybe I should've tried reasoning with Thomas before running off like that and I wouldn't be getting myself in trouble now. It'll be worth it anyway if it ensures us being able to complete our mission without a silly little monster in the canyons getting in our way."

While she was talking to herself, her foot brushed over a stone and Kiara looked down at it. She picked up the stone and wondered

where it came from. She threw the stone away, the stone making an echoing clatter as it hit the walls and ricocheted off of it, and she looked around herself to see where it came from. Then Kiara saw something that shocked her. The stone belonged to the rock pile that Marik has made by causing a rock slide earlier. The very rock slide that claimed poor Wilson's life. Kiara gasped in horror at the rock pile and she put her hands on her chest. Her tail twitched nervously behind her.

"Oh my…gosh!" she spluttered "The monster…did this and killed Wilson? It must have some power behind it if…if it caused a rockslide like that! I'd best be extra careful when I fight it and stay away from any caves so it can't get me with a rockslide."

Kiara walked away shakily from the rock pile, resisting the urge to dig through the pile and find Wilson's dead body, and she wondered on down the canyon. Unbeknownst to her, Marik had arrived on the cliff tops and he observed her from his hiding place. Like before, he stood where the sun was shining so his appearance would be obscured by the bright light and make it harder to see him. He watched Kiara walking through the canyons and he sighed to himself.

"At least it's not Sonic." he mused "It's just some spotty girl in leather trousers who possibly has great speed as she was moving quickly according to the scanner back at the weapon. I'm not sure what animal she is but I don't care. All Mobians are my enemies and I'll snag all of them. And now I shall snag this lonely little one down there." he purred darkly, his metal fingers crackling with electricity.

He then pointed a metal claw as sharp as a spear a Kiara and let loose a big jolt of electricity. The electric bolt rushed towards Kiara but the cheetah heard it coming and she leaped out of the way, leaving the jolt to hit the ground and singe it slightly. Kiara gasped in surprise at that sudden attack and she looked up at the cliff tops wildly for the monster. Now she really had to be weary of it since it had electric attacks.

"Who's there?" asked Kiara "Show yourself demon! You don't scare me! Come down and face me!"

That just provoked another electrical attack from Marik. He fired a jolt of electricity at her but Kiara was out of the way before it even half reached her. The cheetah looked up at the cliff tops again to see if she could spot the monster. The sun's light however obscured his appearance and Kiara couldn't keep her eyes open due to the sun's bright light, hence the reason Marik stands there in the first place. Marik took this opportunity to leap down from the cliff tops and onto the ground below. Kiara opened her eyes and rubbed the sunlight out of them only to get a tremendous uppercut from Mark that sent her hurling to the wall at the force of a football being kicked at a wall. The cheetah grimaced in pain as her spine felt like it cracked in several places and Marik advanced on her menacingly with his metal claws crackling with electricity. Kiara pressed her back against the wall and stared at Marik in horror. She was always afraid of alien life and seeing an actual alien standing before her just made her feel like she was going to have a heart-attack.

"Oh my gosh!" she cried "You're an a-a-alien! N-n-no wonder you're the c-c-canyon monster!"

"You got that right spotty." snapped Marik "I am your so-called "canyon monster" and I'm the one who's been killing all your men as they dare to venture through these canyons."

"Wh-who are you and…gulp…,why are you slaying all the people who come through here?" asked Kiara nervously, her heart kicking her ribcage like crazy as the Martian came up to her.

"I am Marik the Martian and I'm protecting an Eggman weapon from you Royal Fighters." explained Marik "I found it two days ago and I wish to use it to destroy this miserable excuse for a planet with it. However, you Royal Fighters keep coming through the canyons obviously intending to dismantle it and put it out of action so I'm stopping you all from getting near it. That's why I keep killing your men."

Kiara couldn't believe what the Martian had just told her. He was the canyon monster and was killing the soldiers so he could stop them from destroying the weapon and henceforth, use it himself? That Martian was one heck of a baddie wasn't he?

"Why do you wanna destroy the world?" asked Kiara nervously as Marik stood before her, gazing darkly into her terrified eyes an sandwiching her between him and the wall "Do you hate us or something like that?"

"I do." snarled Marik "We Martians are peace haters and we destroy any race that craves for it. You Mobians are particularly loathsome as you're constantly being a problem for me! Sonic the Hedgehog being the primary one! I've battled Sonic for many months now and I'm going to destroy him along with the rest of you when I can finally get the weapon to work and use it on this planet!"

"Huh? Finally get the weapon to work?" echoed Kiara "Does that mean it's not working?"

"I think its working but I don't know as I can't even use it." admitted Marik "It's built to only work for Dr. Eggman so only that fat idiot can use it. I however, am attempting to hack into it so I can use it for myself but I haven't made much progress since you Royal Fighters won't give me a moment of peace to try and hack into it!"

"Well what do you expect?" retorted Kiara "We're Royal Fighters and we fight for what's right! We're not gonna stand by and let a potential doomsday weapon remain standing for any evil doer on Mobius to use so of course we won't give you any peace! You can kill as many of us as you wish Marik, we'll keep sending men to destroy the weapon until we can eventually overpower you and get past you so we can get to the end of the canyons and destroy it!"

"Well if that's the case then I'll just have to trash your camp once I kill you heathen!" snarled Marik "Then you can finally stop bothering me over and over!"

With that said Marik drew his arm back and prepared to plunge his metal claws into Kiara's heart. The terrified cheetah shook furiously in terror and she quickly dropped down onto the ground just as Marik lunged at her in order to save herself. His metal claws ended up embedding themselves into the wall. Marik growled furiously and he yanked them back out just as Kiara crawled out from in front of him and ran away from him. Marik caught sight of her and zapped her directly in the back, bringing the cheetah down on the ground.

Kiara turned over onto her back and she began to crawl backwards away from Marik as the Martian advanced on her. Marik pointed his metal claws at Kiara and let her have it with another painful electric shock. The cheetah yelped in pain and she clutched her throbbing body. Marik then tried to kill her again but Kiara rolled out of his way and got back to her feet. Marik slashed at her but Kiara dodged the attack and kicked him in the chest. Marik coughed and spluttered briefly and he rubbed his chest better. He then swiped his arms and sent an energy wave hurling towards Kiara but the cheetah acrobatically jumped over it and somersaulted directly over Marik, surprising the Martian slightly. Kiara then proceeded to punch Marik in the face rapidly at the speed of a champion boxer. Being a cheetah, Kiara could throw her punches as fast as she could run so poor Marik couldn't even keep up with her. Kiara laughed at him as she punched him so rapidly she almost took his head off.

"Ha, ha, ha! Take that demon!" she laughed cockily "You're no match for sheer cheetah speed!"

She then gave Marik an uppercut that sent him hurling through the air and he landed painfully against a wall at the far side of their current position. Marik grunted in pain and he rubbed himself better.

"Cheetah? I guess that's what kind of Mobian you are then." he mused "I like the rapid fast punching. Very swift and very good combat capabilities. Very rare for a woman to be this battle capable and have such speed too."

Kiara just zoomed up to Marik and prepared to deck him again but the Martian back flipped and walloped her in the face with his feet as they flipped up and over. Kiara was sent skidding on the ground and her back seared with pain. She rubbed it tenderly and picked herself up. Marik just stood before her with a smirking grin on his face.

"You're pretty fast on your feet too." observed Marik "But you can't compare to Sonic and his super speed."

"I may not be as fast as Sonic but I'm fast enough to kick your ass Marik!" screamed Kiara furiously.

She charged at Marik and slugged him in the stomach at the speed

of a professional wrestler launching a powerful punch. Marik gasped in pain and Kiara fist-slammed him into the ground. Marik however, grabbed her ankle and threw her leg upwards, making her fall over. Marik then grabbed both of Kiara's legs and swung her further down the canyon. Kiara landed painfully on her back and she grimaced in pain. Marik then ran up to Kiara, albeit without his jet shoes as they were broken, and just as Kiara was standing up, he roundhouse punched the sporty little cheetah and almost knocked her out cold. Kiara just managed to keep from falling over and she pounded Marik on the helmet. Foolish move as Marik's helmet was much too hard for a punch like that. Kiara yelped in pain and she sucked on her sore first to ease the pain. Marik took the perfect opportunity to left hook and right hook her in the face, slug her in the stomach and then kick her in the shins, taking her legs out from underneath her and bringing her down onto the ground. Marik then kicked Kiara as viciously as he could and sent her rolling across the ground. The cheetah groaned in annoyance and she stood back up. Marik ran towards her but Kiara leaped forward and kneed him in the gut. She then backhanded Marik down onto the ground and she legged it. Kiara had a bright idea. She was going to run away and hope Marik would chase her and wear himself out and then she could subdue the tired Martian with laser cuffs Thomas had given her. She was running in the direction the weapon was so Marik ran after her in order to stop her from reaching the weapon. Kiara didn't run at top speed so Marik wouldn't catch on to her plan and she kept the chase at a steady pace. Marik sprinted after her at top speed, severely wishing his jet shoes were working so he could catch her easier. The cheetah looked over her shoulder and noticed Marik was desperately trying to catch her and stop her from messing with the weapon. She smirked at Marik and then began to pick up the pace, sprinting ever faster. Kiara's stamina was far greater then Marik's when it came to running so she'd run the Martian down easily. And after a few minutes of running, it seemed her plan was working. Marik began to pant heavily and his sprinting began to slow down gradually. The Martian was getting tired now and he was lagging behind. Marik finally gave up on the chase and dropped down onto his hands and knees, panting and gasping terribly. He sounded like he was having an asthma attack right now.

"Pant…huff…Curse that…silver…hedgehog! Pant, puff, huff! For

disabling…my jet shoes…cough!...this…wouldn't have…happened if I…gasp!...could use them right now!"

Kiara beamed with pride, pleased to see her plan had worked and she sprinted back over to Marik. She roundhouse punched him in the face and knocked him onto his back. Marik stood up and tried to throw another punch but he was just too tired. He missed and Kiara elbowed him in the neck. The Martian fell down again, still puffing for breath, and Kiara whipped out the laser cuff sphere. She put the sphere in-between Marik's wrists and lasers wrapped tightly around Marik's wrists. The Martian was in laser cuffs and unable to fight now. He growled in annoyance to himself and Kiara hauled him up onto his feet. The cheetah smirked triumphantly at the defeated Martian.

"The canyon monster is now a prisoner of the Megapolis Royal Fighters." she sneered "And Thomas had the nerve to think I couldn't do this. That tiger's going to have a big change of heart when he sees this. And I'm sure Mandy Mouse is going to be very pleased to find out you're the canyon monster Marik so now she knows who killed her boyfriend."

"What-freaking-ever." snorted Marik "I demand that you release me at once!"

"Not on your frigging life freak!" snapped Kiara "You're gonna stand trial for what you've done and after we've destroyed the Egg-Blaster, you're going to prison for crimes against the R.F.S!"

With that said, she dragged the cuffed Martian away from the canyons and headed back to the R.F.S. camp to show him to her friends back at the camp. As she left the canyons however, she failed to notice a large rock on the rock pile Marik made earlier was wobbling about slightly…

Back at the R.F.S. camp, Thomas had been anxiously waiting for Kiara to return from the Mega-Canyons with a pair of binoculars in his hand. The canyons were a good distance away from the camp and he could see the canyons a lot better through the binoculars.

The wait had been absolute murder for him. Every second that ticked by just made Thomas's anxiousness increase more and more as time went on. Mandy had been waiting with him and her anxieties began to increase more and more as time went by too. The tiger lowered the binoculars slowly after looking through them again. His face was ashen with worry.

"Still no sign of her?" asked Mandy nervously.

"No Mandy." said Thomas "The girl's been in those canyons for twenty minutes now and hasn't shown up again. I hope she's not in trouble."

"Well maybe she wouldn't be in trouble if you'd just get some guts and go through those canyons yourself Thomas!" snapped Mandy crossly "You're a Field Marshal, the highest rank in the R.F.S. and you're letting some monster lurking in the canyons bother you? I though you had more courage then that Thomas!"

"Mandy, I can't risk my life in those canyons and get killed by the creature!" shouted Thomas "My loss will be a very heavy loss for my group and they'll more then likely lose all hope if I get killed! I'm pretty much the only reason they haven't given up yet as I'm a huge symbol of hope in their eyes and I don't want this group to lose that kind of hope!"

"That's a good point actually." said Mandy agreeably "But if you and the whole camp went in the canyons at once then that creature would have no chance. It can't possibly take you all on."

Thomas groaned in annoyance at himself and he slapped himself exasperatedly on the head. He realized that Mandy was right and he was annoyed at the fact he didn't consider that idea already.

"I am such a moron!" he cursed himself "Why didn't I think of that before? If the whole camp went into the canyons then the creature would surely have a lot of trouble bringing us all down and we would surely destroy it."

"If only we did that when me and Wilson came to help." said Mandy glumly "Then Wilson wouldn't have gotten killed by that thing in the

first place."

"I know child, he wouldn't have." muttered Thomas "If only I came up with this method before then that creature would be as good as dead and poor Wilson…"

"Wait a minute." interrupted Mandy "What's that coming from the canyons?"

She pointed into the distance and Thomas looked at what she was pointing at. A cloud of dust was trailing from the canyons and coming towards them. Thomas felt a twinge of hope glimmer in his stomach and he eagerly looked through his binoculars. He could see none other then Kiara the Cheetah running at top speed from the canyons and coming back to the camp with Marik the Martian in tow. Thomas was so relieved he almost lost his commander like manner and did a back flip for joy.

"It's Kiara!" he cheered "She made it out alive and she appears to have the creature captured and defeated with her!"

"That's great!" cried Mandy "If only I was so damning lucky!" she added bitterly, fuming over the fact Kiara defeated the creature and she didn't.

Kiara ran all the way back to the camp and she skidded to a halt before the tiger and mouse. The cheetah threw Marik down onto the ground roughly, the Martian grunting as his shoulder made sharp contact with the ground. Thomas and Mandy stared at him and Mandy's eyes widened in shock whereas Marik just glared at them.

"Marik?" blurted Mandy in surprise.

"I'm surprised you recognize me despite the fact we've hardly met each other." muttered Marik crossly.

"You know this stranger?" asked Thomas.

"I do. More's the pity." muttered Mandy coldly "He and blue dude are fierce enemies apparently and he's a very cheeky little scumbag too. He openly insulted us before he fought Shadow the Hedgehog and got his arm broken in the process* and I really didn't like that."

"If my insults displease you then you should see what else I can do." sniffed Marik.

"You can shut up!" snarled Kiara, kicking Marik sharply in the back "Thomas, this alien freak you see before you is the canyon monster. He openly admitted so himself to me before trying to kill me."

"He's the canyon monster?" shrieked Mandy "He's the one who's been killing all of Thomas's men? Well if he's the guy me and Wilson were sent to battle earlier, then that means…"

Something in her head went click and she realized that Marik was the one who killed Wilson. The mouse lost her cool and she tried to lunge on Marik in blind rage. The Martian showed no concerns whatsoever as Mandy lashed out at him but Thomas grabbed her and held her back. The mouse began raging like crazy at Marik as Thomas held her back.

"YOU MONSTER! YOU KILLED WILSON YOU DEMON FROM HELL!" she screamed "WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON YOU, YOU WILL WISH YOU'D NEVER COME TO MOBIUS IN THE FIRST PLACE!"

Marik just sniffed at her and he remained sitting on the floor with his hands clasped together. Thomas dragged Mandy away from Marik and the tiger began sternly talking to the mouse.

"Mandy dear, calm down this instant!" he barked.

"But sir, he's the one who killed Wilson, my boyfriend, my whole world even!" protested Mandy "I only want to make him pay for it!"

"You desire to avenge poor Wilson will only continue to cloud your judgement Mandy." said Thomas dryly.

"But…!" began Mandy.

"Getting revenge on the one who killed Wilson won't bring him back, nor will it make you feel better." said Thomas in a fatherly tone "You'll only feel empty for the rest of your life and like you've accomplished nothing whatsoever."

Mandy tensed up angrily for a moment, her eyelid twitching slightly but the mouse sighed and looked down at the ground miserably. The tiger was absolutely right. As much as she wished to deck Marik for killing her boyfriend, it wasn't going to be of much good to her as nothing would improve and she wouldn't feel right afterwards. She looked back up at Thomas with a softer expression on her beautiful face this time.

"I understand." said Mandy softly "I'm sorry Thomas."

"You're quite alright child." said Thomas "I know how you feel now you know who killed Wilson. Well in order to get back at him, you can guard him and make sure he stays put while me and the boys destroy the Eggman weapon at last. Now Marik's been detained, he can't stop us from destroying it."

"Yes Thomas." said Mandy "I will not fail you sir."

"Very good Mandy." said Thomas "When we come back, we'll take Marik to prison and you can go home and hold a tribute funeral for Wilson."

"That's the most he deserves." said Mandy "For making my life complete and being a loyal asset to the team. Good luck with the weapon's destruction by the way."

Thomas grinned a nice, warm, cheery grin that made Mandy feel more high-spirited. The tiger really was a symbol of hope in this group wasn't he? Thomas then walked off and yelled out to the troops.

"OK chaps! We can destroy the weapon at last!" announced Thomas "The canyon monster is defeated and the weapon is unguarded! Let's destroy it before Eggman ever re-discovers it!"

The troops immediately began to pack their supplies for the mission. The main weapons needed really were explosives of any kind and boxes to carry them in so packing for the mission was pretty simple. Marik just sat there and watched as everybody packed their supplies and prepared to go off to destroy the weapon. Kiara folded her arms and glared at him.

"Well?" she said coldly "Aren't you going to try and stop us then?"

"In this condition?" snorted Marik, raising his cuffed hands "I can't. Even a being as stubborn as me knows when he's beat. Besides, I can't use the bloody thing anyway so destroy it for all I care. I could always just find another one once I get out of this scrape."

Kiara snorted at him and she turned her back on him. Thomas Tiger and all his troops came to the edge of the camp with their supplies at the ready and they prepared to go. Before they could go though, Thomas said something to Kiara.

"Even though it was bad of you to disobey orders." he said "It was good that you managed to capture the creature. For this, I won't court martial you but this is the only time I'm letting you off child."

"Noted and taken in sir." said Kiara "I won't disobey you again sir."

"There's a good girl." said Thomas cheerily "Mandy, you keep a good eye on Marik until we get back."

"I'll hardly take my eyes off him sir." said Mandy with a rather grim expression on her face as she glowered at Marik, the Martian just looking back at her with uncaring eyes.

"Very good." said Thomas "OK men. To the end of the canyons!" he bellowed "Forward MARCH!"

With that said, the tiger, Kiara and all his troops marched off out of the camp in single file, their feet making an awesome marching sound in unison as they headed off to the Mega-Canyons. Mandy stood and watched them with a hopeful expression on her face as they left to get rid of the Egg-Blaster. Now Marik was here with her, the destruction of that weapon was ascertained. There was only one thing left to do now. Guard Marik and make sure he didn't get away. Not that getting away would do him much good as he was bound in laser cuffs. Mandy shot the Martian a cold glare that dripped with hatred and she had this itching nerve in her bones to break his teeth. But she wasn't told to batter the Martian so she reluctantly resisted the urge to do so. Instead, she slipped on her trademark weapons, the brass knuckle attachments she liked to use, and she

began to pace back and forth, keeping her steely yellow eyes on Marik. Marik just watched her pace back and forth, clearly bored right now and hoping Mandy would do something interesting right now.

"Is that all you're going to do mouse girl?" whined Marik "Just pace back and forth aimlessly? Just because you're a guard, it doesn't mean you have to do that you know."

"Shut up!" snapped Mandy "I swear to god if it wasn't for Thomas's orders tying me down, I would punch your head off you murderer!"

"Then why don't you do so Mandy?" sneered Marik "Thomas ain't here now so you can do what you like to me."

"No I can't." said Mandy "Given rules apply, even if the commander is not there. That's one of the big rules of the R.F.S."

"Urgh, you Mobian heathens are too reliant on primitive, hindering rules aren't you?" jeered Marik "No wonder we Martians are superior. We don't have nearly as much rules as you fluffy dirt bags."

"You look like you could do with some rules to tie you down Marik." sniffed Mandy "You clearly have too much freedom. By the way, why did you kill Wilson you beastly little freak from outer space?" she added, her face turning into a very hardcore scowl that amazingly, didn't make Marik shudder "What has that poor old dog ever done to you?"

"He bit my arm during the Chaos Emerald hunt**." said Marik bitterly "I'm amazed you don't remember. You were there when it happened. I was about to kill you and Wilson bit my arm in order to stop me."

"Oh." said Mandy "About that, I was kidnapped long before the hunt began*** and got replaced by an Automaton. That wasn't the real me you saw at the time, it was a robot faker posing as me."

"No wonder your foot felt like metal when you kicked me." muttered Marik "You were actually a robot. Are you the real flesh-and-blood

Mandy or are you another fake?"

"I'm the real Mandy Marik." said Mandy "According to Amy, the Automaton got destroyed in Adabat****. Since I missed out on the hunt, everybody had to bring me up to speed after Wilson rescued me from Eggman's clutches***** so now I know what happened when I was gone. Except Wilson biting your arm, he didn't tell me that. I must say, it was really cool that he did that. I knew that dog had some courage hidden in him somewhere."

"Yes, yes, maybe, um, whatever." muttered Marik in an unimpressed manner "By the way, why do you love that dog so much anyway? Your fondness for one another confuses me."

"Why does that not surprise me?" scoffed Mandy "You probably don't even know what love is you sadistic little tyrant!"

"I do know what love is you stupid little rat!" snapped Marik "If we Martians didn't know what love was then how could people like me ever exist? Now answer the question please, I did ask nicely you know."

Mandy just glared at Marik but she decided to tell him anyway just to give herself something good about Wilson to think about right now to raise her spirits. She hugged herself and sighed gently.

"I love Wilson because he helped me to overcome my fears and problems when I was just a child." said Mandy slowly "When I was a kid, I was bullied like there was no tomorrow due to my fur colour. People considered purple to be a freakish fur colour as not many people had purple fur in Mobotropolis. I was considered a freak and an outcast just because of my fur colour and I couldn't understand why."

"Neither can I." said Marik "We Martians don't have fur so I can't feel your grief in anyway."

"Charmed." said Mandy sarcastically "Anyway, I couldn't take the bullying so I let my teachers know about it. They had a thing against people who insulted fur colours so they expelled the bullies for a long time. Unfortunately, they came back and their bullying was

more extreme this time. Extreme to the point where they almost killed me! One bully literally pulled knife out of his pocket and he tried to stab me in the heart!" she paused for a moment to put her hand over her chest, feeling her heartbeat which heaved just remembering it "That's how much they hated me! They attempted to kill me! However, one of the head teachers caught him and the group was expelled again, permanently this time. I never saw them again after that. Unfortunately when the new year came out, more bullies came and tormented me for my fur colour. I almost considered shaving myself bald after that until…I met him. Wilson the Dog. Wilson had similar problems to me. He was tormented for his fur colour too and he had pity on me. We then sat together and talked to one another about our problems and decided to do something about it. Then together, we made a campaign on the playground to promote anti-bullying and anti-racism. The campaign was a success and nobody ever tormented anybody about their fur colours again. I was so happy that Wilson helped me do this that in my teen years, I began to fall in love with him. We loved each other so much that we kept it well on through our teen years to now. I met him when I was eleven and he met me when he was twelve. I'm twenty-one and he's twenty-two and we're still together now. It was like…we were meant for each other, almost like we were destined to be together, maybe even soul mates. And for ten years, I was so happy now I had my Wilson beside me…and then you decided to take that all away from me by killing him!" she wailed at Marik "You took away the one person that made me feel better about myself as well as stop me from shaving my fur off and I wish I could pay you back! But that won't solve anything and it won't bring him back. I'll just have to go through the pain of moving on without him."

She turned away from Marik and wiped away a tear that trickled down her face. As for Marik, he'd listened to Mandy's story (and amazingly managed to stay awake through the whole thing as it was a boring story to him) and he came up with an idea to get free. And that idea involved him playing around with Mandy's pains. He grinned sadistically and he sat up straight.

"So what are you going to do now Wilson's dead?" asked Marik "Shave yourself bald? He was the one who tempted you not to after all."

"No!" snapped Mandy "That'll just pour salt on Wilson's wounds! It'll put everything we campaigned for to shame if I did that and make myself look displeased with my fur colour!"

"Why would it matter? Wilson's dead!" noted Marik "And fur colour's not going to be much of a problem for him anymore because when he gets laid to rest, he won't have any fur left so Wilson won't really care much about that."

"You take that back you scum heap!" snarled Mandy furiously.

"Why should I rat?" snapped Marik with a devious smile on his face.

"Don't you dare call me a rat!" growled Mandy.

"Why not?" asked Marik "Do you mice find the term "rat" offensive?"

"Yes we do!" snapped Mandy "We mice are nothing like those filthy beasts! We're much better then rats and to be called one is a grave offence to mice everywhere!"

"Sheesh, I never knew rats could be so touchy about themselves?" cackled Marik.

"I said don't you dare call me a rat!" shouted Mandy, her fists trembling angrily and itching to punch him.

"I'll call you whatever I like you verminous waste of good air and I wish to call you a rat!" retorted Marik "You're an odd-coloured, verminous little rat Mandy and that's all you'll ever be in my eyes!"

That did it, Mandy cracked at last and she drew her arm back. Her face contorted with unfathomable rage and her face turned from purple to red.

"I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S THE VERMIN AROUND HERE!" she bellowed at the top of her voice.

She was just about to punch Marik in the face but Marik bent over backwards and raised his cuffed hands. Mandy ended up punching the sphere that generated the lasers and her knuckle attachments ended up breaking it! The lasers switched off and the sphere fell

down to the ground in pieces! Marik was free to cause trouble once again and it was all her fault! Mandy clasped her hands over her mouth in shock.

"Oops!" she whimpered.

Marik just sneered at her and he picked himself up, rubbing his wrists and grinning maliciously at her. The insidious Martian advanced on Mandy with his claws bared and his teeth clenched into a devious smile that could make a shark poop himself with fear.

"Something wrong Mandy?" he purred "I thought you wanted to kick my hide in for murdering your precious Wilson…"

Meanwhile, The Megapolis Royal Fighters had marched through the Mega-Canyons and to the Egg-Blaster, the very thing they kept trying to get through the canyons for in the first place. Because of Marik's capture, the march was uninterrupted and everybody made it to the end alive this time. This just made Thomas Tiger even more cheerful then before because now their mission could commence without interruption this time and they were going to destroy a potential doomsday weapon. Now the team had made it to the weapon, Thomas ordered his soldiers to set up detonators all over the weapon and then rig them to fire. The soldiers did as they were ordered and they set up their supply of detonators all over the weapon inside and outside. Even Kiara set up some detonators as she wanted to take part in this mission just as much as everybody else. Thomas just stood by and watched as his men set the charges. He had the controls for the detonators in his hands and once the detonators had been set up, he would push the button on the control stick and the Eggman-weapon would go *kaboom!* in a milisecond. The whole set up didn't take long for the soldiers as there were no guards, traps or secret weapons hiding anywhere in order to stop them dead in their tracks. In less then ten minutes flat, the whole group had set detonators all over the Egg-Blaster. There were detonators all over the weapon. On the cannon barrel, on the turret, inside the control centre base around it and even on the coupling bolts that held it together. Now that was done, all that was left was to set them to go.

"Royal Fighters! Fall back into the canyons for cover!" ordered Thomas at the top of his voice.

The Royal Fighters did as they were instructed and they ran away from the canyon and back into the Mega-Canyons as fast as they could in orderly fashion. One by one the team ran into the canyons so they would be out of harm's way when the bombs went off. Kiara was the first one in of course due to her superspeed and Thomas was the last one in as he had to set the bombs off and he had to be a reasonable range for the detonators to respond to the control stick. Thomas pressed the button on the stick and the detonators all went off in unison. The Egg-Blaster erupted into a very impressive fireball with smoke billowing out of it and debris flying every where but not hitting any of the Royal Fighters as they were shielded by the canyon walls. The debris just bounced harmlessly off the rocks and the fire blazed through the wreckage of the destroyed Egg-Blaster. The Megapolis Royal Fighters came out of their hiding places in order to see what their work had done and they were impressed by the blazing, smoking ruin they had reduced the Egg-Blaster to. Dr. Eggman didn't know the weapon existed and due to it's destruction, the loss of such a powerful laser cannon wouldn't effect him in anyway. Eggman wouldn't even notice since he didn't even know the weapon existed. The Royal Fighters all cheered and whooped for joy at their completed mission.

"Whoo Hoo!" squealed Kiara joyfully "We did it! The weapon's useless to anybody now!"

"Yes Kiara, we've destroyed the weapon." said Thomas proudly "Although we couldn't have done it without you. You subdued Marik and brought him back to camp, therefore leaving the canyons safe to go through again. You made this possible Kiara and because of this, you shall receive most of the credit for this victory."

"Huh? Wow! I uh...I...ahem...thank you sir." said Kiara modestly "But don't give me ALL the credit, I don't wanna make everybody think I'm a better leader then you are Thomas."

"I'm glad you see it that way lass." said Thomas proudly "Now team, let's go back to camp and punish the canyon monster for all he's done to this group!" he ordered to his troops.

The Royal Fighters obeyed and they marched back through the canyons to home where Mandy Mouse and their prisoner were waiting for them...

...actually, waiting was not the right term. More like FIGHTING back at camp. Now Marik had managed to trick Mandy into breaking his cuffs, the two decided to proper brawl it out with one another. This was a battle for two different things: freedom and revenge. Mandy was fighting for revenge and Marik was fighting for freedom (although really, he's just fighting Mandy because she's one of Sonic's friends and anyone affiliated with Sonic is on his bad side, regardless of many or little encounters with them). This fight was very tense and heavy due to how desperately ethier opponent wanted to win this. Marik lashed out at Mandy with his metal claws and he lightly scratched her on the forearm due to Mandy leaping backwards and him only just catching her. The furious mouse retaliated with a heavy punch to the face, made all the more harder due to her knuckle attachments. Marik growled angrily and he retaliated with a punch to the face, then a backhand to the face and then he leaped up and roundhouse kicked Mandy in the cheek. Despite those attacks, Mandy amazingly managed to stay standing up. Marik cackled at her as he prepared for another attack. He swiped his arms and sent an energy wave hurling at Mandy but Mandy leaped over the wave and dropkicked him in the face, knocking Marik down onto his back. Marik picked himself up only to receive an uppercut to the chin from Mandy. Marik staggered backwards and he rubbed his chin better. Amazingly though, Marik's cruel lips were twisted into a sinister smile.

"You're quite the feisty one aren't you, if lacking in strength however." said Marik as he and Mandy circled each other slowly "Was Wilson as weak as you are?" he added with a cruel sneer.

"Just. keep. talking. Marik!" snarled Mandy.

She then roared a fearsome, bloodcurdling battle cry and charged at Marik at top speed. Marik however just jumped over the charging mouse and kicked her down onto the ground as he sailed over her. Mandy ended up with a face full of dirt and she picked herself up,

spitting the dirt out of her mouth. Marik then took the perfect opportunity to slash Mandy in the back with his metal claws. Mandy screamed in pain and she clutched her back, which now had five bloody cuts on it. The attack had torn bits of her combat suit too. Mandy swung around and backhanded Marik furiously across the battlefield, the Martian hurling backwards a good few feet after that hit. Marik picked himself up and waited for Mandy to come to him again. The mouse charged towards him at her fastest speed and she drew her arm back, ready to launch the killer punch on him. Marik just drew his arm back and gave Mandy an uppercut that sent her hurling through the air in a rainbow arch and she landed rather sharply on her back. The impact was made more painful by the cuts she'd just received from Marik earlier. Mandy picked herself up just as Marik was charging towards her. Marik was about to let Mandy have it with another attack but Mandy leaped into the air and dropkicked him onto his back before he could get her. Marik lay on his back wondering what hit him. At least her foot didn't feel like metal this time. Now Marik knew he was against the real Mandy. Mandy then leaped onto Marik and then began to punch him furiously all over his body, the Martian taking most of the hits due to his tough body. Mandy punched Marik over and over until Marik grabbed her by the arm with his metal hand and painfully electrocuted her. The mouse screeched in pain as electricity surged up her body and Marik then effortlessly threw her off himself. The mouse wouldn't give up though. She charged towards Marik and tried to deck him again but Marik dodged her attack and punched her in the cheek. Then he kneed her in the gut, elbowed her on the back and then let her drop down onto the ground. He then viciously kicked Mandy away and sent her rolling across the ground. Mandy came to a stop and she lay on the ground, panting and coughing hoarsely from her injuries. The mouse was finding it hard to stand up. Marik advanced on Mandy casually while taunting her mercilessly again.

"You should have finished me when you had the chance Mandy, just like I finished Wilson when **I** had the chance!" he jeered "Well unfortunately, you blew your chance mouse-girl. Now, allow me to put you out of your misery…permanently!" he cackled, baring his claws.

Mandy then suddenly pushed herself onto her feet while mumbling inaudibly to herself.

"Excuse me?" asked Marik "I didn't hear your last words. Could you repeat them for me? I love hearing what my victims have to say before I rip their hearts out."

"This…is…for…WILSON!" bellowed Mandy, suddenly leaping back onto her feet and pouncing on Marik.

Marik's taunts seemed to have more brought new strength to Mandy then weakened her as Mandy's determination to beat him just got stronger with every taunt. Mandy gave Marik a couple of sucker punches, then a left and right hook each and then a powerful uppercut all to his face at once. Mandy then screamed a furious battle cry of rage and she roundhouse kicked Marik onto the ground. She pinned Marik to the ground and raised her fist, ready to break Marik's face with a powerful punch. The defeated Martian just glared at her furiously.

"Go ahead, finish me!" he dared "I took your boyfriend, the one person who made your life better after having a horrible start so I deserve this! Go on! Finish me! You have me at your mercy! Take the opportunity now you have it Mandy! You may never get so lucky again!"

"As if I needed convincing!" said Mandy with a voice dripping with ice coldness.

She then raised her fist and prepared to kill Marik once and for all. But then something crept into her head and stopped her dead in her tracks. What would Wilson say if he saw her killing somebody out of sheer hatred and vengeance? Wilson detested killing unless necessary and he would not want to see Mandy do such a thing. Not to mention, Marion, her sister, wouldn't approve of this ethier. Mandy was not about to dishonour the deaths of her sister and boyfriend by doing something they both detested. Also, Mandy was not giving Marik the satisfaction of becoming like him. Mandy lowered her arm but she kept her steely gaze fixed on Marik.

"No. I'm not like you." she said in a low, chilling voice that made her

sound more evil then heroic "I'm not going to become like you Marik the Murderer. But I am going to do this."

She then punched Marik in the forehead but not at her hardest, just hard enough to knock the Martian out. Now Marik was knocked out, Mandy stood back up and dusted her hands off.

"I'll just get you another pair of laser cuffs and bind you back up." she said to herself "Then Thomas will have you court-martialed and locked away forever. That'll teach you to kill some Royal Fighters and my boyfriend."

So Mandy wondered off to a tent to get some laser cuffs for the knocked out Marik. Only…Marik wasn't knocked out! The Martian's stamina was just too good for the Mobians and a punch to the forehead with knuckle attachments added was only going to give him a slight headache at the most. Marik felt the small bump on his forehead that Mandy had caused and he growled furiously. He saw Mandy heading to a tent and he crept after her. He then raised his claws and prepared to plunge them into her the moment she stepped out of the tent. Then suddenly, somebody sneaked up behind him and bit him on the arm! Marik screamed in pain and tried to wrestle his arm out of the attacker's jaws. Mandy heard the commotion and she burst out of the tent to see what was going on. What she saw was enough to sweep her off her feet. Marik yanked his arm out of the attacker's grasp and he gripped it, rubbing it tenderly. He then stared at the attacker and his jaw dropped.

"Wh…at…?" he squeaked.

"You do not touch Mandy you demon!" yelled none other then Wilson the Dog!

The dog wasn't dead after all! In fact, with the exception of a large bump on his head he looked just fine! Mandy was so overwhelmed with joy that she thought she was going to die of shock.

"Wilson?" she stammered "I-I-Is that r-really you? It can't be! I'm hallucinating! You can't be here! You're dead! I'm seeing ghosts!"

"Mandy, if I were a ghost, would I have been able to bite Marik's

arm?" noted Wilson.

Mandy looked at Marik's arm and noticed that he had real teeth marks on them. A real ghost couldn't do that as ghosts are incapable of bodily contact as they're faded images people see with their imaginations. Then that meant…

"You're alive!" squealed Mandy, running up to Wilson and throwing her arms around him. She began to break down with happy tears trickling down her face "Oh thank the heavens above! I thought I'd lost you for good Wilson! I thought you were killed by the rockslide!"

"So did I!" muttered Marik, still rubbing his arm "How in the name of mercury did you possibly survive that rockslide dog?"

"I was never in the rockslide." explained Wilson, talking to Mandy more then Marik "I ran into the cave just as the rockslide began but I got knocked out by a rather sizable rock in the cave. I woke up only to find myself trapped in the cave and I tried to get out but I couldn't as the rocks were too heavy so I tunneled my way out by digging under the rock pile. So sorry it took so long Mandy, I bet you were worried sick about me while I was in there."

"I thought you were dead!" exclaimed Mandy "But I'm so glad you're alive! I thought my life was going to take a nose-dive now you were gone! But you're alive and my life is still complete now!"

"I know it is." said Wilson "Now, am I right to guess Marik was the canyon monster and he's here to be arrested?"

"He is." said Mandy coldly "Now you're here, we can finish him together and bring him to justice for all he's done these past two days."

"You two are insane if you think you can catch me!" yelled Marik "My jet shoes maybe disabled but I can still run fast. And so you I can slow you two down…"

He swiped his left arm at them and Wilson and Mandy were stricken by an energy wave. The two Mobians were swept off their feet and sent hurling into a tent. The tent collapsed on top of them and they

got tangled up in it, giving Marik the perfect opportunity to flee his pants off. Marik grinned evilly at the tangled up Mobians and he ran for it as fast as he could. As much as he hated retreating, he knew he was beaten, his arm was injured and not in the best condition for fighting due to Wilson biting it and he wasn't trained to fight with just one arm so it would be best to wait until his arm healed. Wilson and Mandy finally managed to get free from under the tent but Marik was already long gone by now. Mandy thumped the ground furiously and she scowled to herself.

"Blast it all! He got away!" she moaned "And just when I was looking forward to seeing him pay for his crimes against the R.F.S.!"

"I was looking forward to seeing him pay for almost killing me." said Wilson grimly "Maybe next time, that freak can't run forever you know, especially as Silver's hindered him speed wise."

"Yeah." said Mandy agreeably "And blue dude can run faster then him so Marik can run but he won't be able to get away from him once he's on the case."

"Sonic's the fastest thing alive after all." said Wilson "Nothing can outrun him. And when Marik gets captured at last, I'll be waiting for his sentence."

"Moving on from Marik Wilson, I'm just so, so glad that he failed to kill you." said Mandy, hugging Wilson again "I thought I'd never see you again."

"I was just one lucky puppy I guess." said Wilson "I'm glad I made it out alive too. Otherwise I'd never get to see your pretty face again Mandy."

Mandy just giggled at Wilson's comment and she pulled the dog into a kiss. Their lips locked with each other and they wrapped their arms around each other, embracing each other lovingly. Their love had survived this encounter and it was certain to survive all other encounters. But Wilson and Mandy would have to enjoy this moment as a world-shattering event was about to commence and it involved clusters and clusters of strange fragments that may seem familiar to Sonic and friends…

Well I'm glad that turned out OK! Wilson's alive and Mandy's pains won't get any worse! But that doesn't mean everything's going to be OK, oh no! There's going to be one heck of an adventure back in the main story so tune back into* Heroes of Mobius *as Sonic and friends investigate an interesting find after the epic battle with Super Scourge! Read and Review.

Meanwhile, get ready for a new Tales from Mobius arc which will feature the mysterious Sora Sumdac on a spying mission with a certain group of anarchists we know too well...

Stratagem of the Reptiles 1

Arc 11: Stratagem of the Reptiles

Takes place five months after Story 93 and a month before Story 94

Part 1: Suspicious Minds

Things had been relatively calm after the defeat of Chaos*. Fives months had passed and there hadn't been any attacks from any of the big baddies of Mobius. Dr. Eggman was still in hiding after his worldwide roboticizer plot had been foiled**, Marik the Martian had gone into hiding after his less then stellar confrontation with Wilson the Dog and Mandy Mouse*** and Scourge had just decided to lay low for a while after the defeat of Chaos due to the fact he was too worn out to attempt anything more. Villains such as Team Diamond hadn't tried anything since their first encounter with Sonic****, Ravage Bloodfang had gone into hiding after his failed attempt to destroy Adabat*****, Imperator Ix was sealed in the void******, Metal Sonic, Alonzo the Butler Bot, Mr. Florenzi and his hench-lizards Polikaza and Wazikaza, Marcus and Celia Punch, Lola Gunn, Rorda, Horda and Borda and Ginger the Fox were all dead and Lord Sycorax, Vector's anarchist father, was still incarcerated and so was Zira the Ruthless, the villain of Chun-Nan so Sonic and friends pretty much didn't have anybody to worry about right now. It seemed that at long last the heroes were gaining an edge on the opposition. Unfortunately, even in the brightest of moments, the tides can turn on you and right now, it seemed that the tides were going to begin a massive U-turn. The Region of Rebellious Reptiles, a group of reptilian anarchists and rebellious reptiles was still at large, even though their leader had been incarcerated after Team Chaotix and the R.F.S. foiled their attempts to destroy Castle Acorn******* and they had been hiding ever since. Diesel the Komodo Dragon had taken it upon himself to take charge of the region in Lord Sycorax's absence and he had big plans right now. Unfortunately for him, Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard and Romeo the Chameleon, two of Lord Sycorax's best men, weren't that thrilled with him as leader and

they were plotting to break Lord Sycorax out of prison. Such news caught the attention of young super spy Sora Sumdac, the head agent of the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit or M.S.I.U. for short. Sora had once helped foil the Festival Folly plot in Chun-Nan******** and now, she was investigating rumours on an attempted breakout to free Lord Sycorax. She'd heard these rumours from one of her agents and she decided she was going to investigate the scene herself. Sora was the kind of spy who loved to find out what's true and what's not. So her bosses arranged a stealth mission for her where she had to find out if the rumours of a plot to break Lord Sycorax out of prison were true and when the plot was going to be attempted. Sora understood her mission and now she was off to the Region of Rebellious Reptile's hidden lair. It was hundreds of miles out to sea and located on a small island in the middle of nowhere so it was going to be pretty hard to find by any normal person. Sora was no normal person though; she was a superspy so finding the lair wasn't very difficult for her, especially as her agent had found the lair for her already. It was night time at the moment and Sora was under the sea in a spy submarine she owned. The submarine could turn into an orb and fit on her utility belt like all her other gadgets so she'd be able to hide it once she arrived and no one would expect her to have a getaway of any kind once she fled for it. As of now, Sora was sailing quietly through the ocean waters in her sleek, stealthy submarine. The submarine was spherical and had two propellers at the back. It was black in colour and it wasn't a large submarine, only about the size of a bubble car. It had a lot of spy-tech equipment such as radar scramblers and hidden weapons. This was not a submarine to be messed with, regardless of its size. As the submarine sailed through the dark waters of the ocean, Sora peered at her radar impatiently, wondering if she'd picked anything up. The radar was bleeping continuously. It was quite clear that Sora had found her destination but just to be double sure, Sora activated the telescope that comes out of the top of submarines so she could see where she was. The telescope extended out from the top of the submarine's fuselage and it peered out of the water and into the night air above it. The telescope had night vision so Sora could see where she was right now. She looked through the telescope and saw that she was heading towards the island the Region of Rebellious Reptiles. The island only had one feature on it and that was the large base the region resided in when they weren't on

missions. There was a hangar bay for their ships and vehicles on the left side of the base and the whole base had a reptilian deco to it. It may not look very subtle but it was in a subtle place, a desolate island that not many people knew about and the base had satellite scrambling abilities so no one would find it, unless they were super spies that is. Sora smiled to herself. She'd found the base and now she can find out what the Region was really up to. Sora made the telescope retract back into the submarine and she activated a communication's device on the control pad.

"Attention M.S.I.U. headquarters, this is Sora Sumdac." Sora said into the mike piece "I have found the region's base and I'm preparing to intercept. I'll give you a report once the mission's over."

"Roger that Sora." came the voice of one of her bosses "You be careful out there sweetheart, those reptiles are vicious anarchists who will sooner eat people rather then hesitate for a moment. If they catch you, you'll be in grave danger Sora."

"I know boss." said Sora "When you're a spy, everything is dangerous but danger is what we live for in this organization."

"You got that right." said the boss "We'll standby and await your updates Sora. Over and out."

The communicator switched off and Sora set her sights back on the island. She was almost ready to port. She was a good few miles away from the island and once she arrived, she would dock the submarine, climb out, shrink it down to orb size and latch it onto her utility belt and then she could begin the mission. Sora hoped dearly that the rumours of this breakout plot weren't true otherwise the R.F.S. were going to be in for one heck of a situation if they were true. After a minute of more sailing, Sora's submarine finally docked but before she could climb out of the submarine, the radar began to bleep furiously. It was telling her there was a guard out on duty and a guard was not the kind of thing that Sora wished to run into right now, especially as she had a mission to do. The guard was an alligator dressed in traditional region armour and quite frankly, he looked like he wished he had a different job. Sora shut down the engines, leaving the submarine to just float under the water and she put on an air helmet. She opened a door above her head and she

climbed out of the submarine and into the ocean waters she was hiding under. She pulled an orb off her belt, which was just an ordinary steel orb that didn't do anything, and she swam up to the surface of the water.

"Guards: they're no obstacle for us superspies." she crowed to herself as she stuck her head out of the water.

She had swam a good distance to the guard's left and just slightly to the shore out of the guard's viewpoint so he wouldn't see her. He was only looking to his left, right and straight ahead of him so he wouldn't see the blue furred fox. Now Sora was out of view, she raised her hand out of the water and she threw the orb onto the island. The orb clattered on the ground behind the guard and it bounced off near to the other side of the dock point. The guard heard the orb clatter and he wandered off to find the orb. The orb rolled pretty far away from his post and the guard was following it so he was going to be out of his post long enough for Sora to get out and sneak in. Now he was gone, Sora climbed out of the water and she removed her air helmet. She pressed something on the shoulder strap of her utility belt that made her submarine come to the surface and she put her helmet back inside the submarine. She then pressed something else on her shoulder strap that made the submarine shrink back down to orb size and she attached it back onto her belt. Now her getaway vehicle was hidden and she was on the island, Sora could investigate these rumours and find out what the rebellion was really up to. Sora crept up to the front door, which was automatic, and she sneaked inside the base. The door opened up and let her in and once she slipped inside, the door closed behind her. Sora found herself in a large hallway with doors on the left and right hand sides and straight ahead. There were about nine doors in total, three on the left, three on the right and three straight ahead. The base was large and those doors could lead to goodness knows where in a place like this so Sora decided not to just randomly look into these rooms and see what was what as she could put herself in danger if she opened the wrong door. Sora decided to take the traditional route a spy takes when he/she investigates something in a strange place. The ventilation shafts. Sora looked around for a grate of any kind, her eyes fixed to the foot of the walls as that was were a grate was usually located. She

spotted one near the first door on the left hand side and she ran over to it. The grate was screwed shut unfortunately so Sora couldn't get in. The spy fox groaned in annoyance to herself.

"Oh how I hate it when I come across things with screws in them!" she muttered to herself "They're always screwing things up for me! Good thing I came with a contingency plan for once."

Due to many experiences with screwed shut gates, Sora had actually brought along a gadget that she could use to get through the grate. It was small pen-sized device that looked like a laser pointer but when you activate the laser, it melted anything it was firing at. Sora had it hidden in her hair (her hair's good at hiding tiny objects due to how big it grows) and she pulled it out from within her hair to melt the screws with it. Sora pointed the laser at the screws on the grate and she activated the laser. A searing hot red laser beam emitted out from the pen-sized laser pointer and it scorched the screw it was firing at. The screw began steaming and it began to melt away into liquid metal as the laser seared away at it. The first screw was now a drop of liquid metal in the screw hole of the grate. Sora proceeded to melt the other screws with her handy laser and in a matter of minutes, the screws were all melted and the grate was available for easy opening. Sora smiled to herself and she kissed the laser pointer happily. She stuffed it back into her hair and she crawled into the ventilation shaft. Unfortunately, now the screws were melted, the grate couldn't be put back in its place so Sora had to leave it lying on the floor, which was going to be a bit of a giveaway for her should anyone came into the hall and see it. The shaft Sora was crawling in started off straight for a little bit and as she neared the first door, the shaft led upwards and over the door and all the other doors in the hallway. Sora tried to climb up the shaft but the surface was too smooth for her to get a good grip and it was too steep so she wouldn't be able to climb up this shaft. Sora however, had a contingency plan that expanded to more then just screws in a grate. She had the perfect gadget for climbing up smooth, steep surfaces. She unclipped an orb on her belt that was near her hip and she twisted it to one side. The orb split in two and a strap dangled out from each half. Sora put the trap around her hand and she placed the orb halves flat against the wall. The orb, when split in two, became a pair of magnets that were powerful enough for

even a 20 stone person to climb up a wall with. Sora carefully used the magnets to pull herself up the wall with, making sure she didn't make too much noise as she climbed or anyone outside would hear her. Sora climbed up the shaft with the aid of the magnets she was now using for this job. It was a steep climb but Sora made it in the end and now she was up to the top of the shaft. The upper part went straight again and it expanded all around the hallway. There were tunnel ways that led to the rooms. One tunnel way led to the first room, one tunnel way went to the second room and so forth. Sora was going to check all nine rooms the doors in the hallway led to, to see what she could find. Sora clipped the magnets back together and she attached it back onto her belt. She crawled through the shaft and turned to the left to go through the first tunnel way. Sora crawled through the tunnel way and she spotted a grate on her left hand side. She crept over to the grate and peered through it. She could see a room that appeared to be just full of boxes. Lots and lots of boxes. This room must be some kind of storage room. There was nobody in the room so Sora wasn't going to learn anything here.

"I bet all those boxes are full of weapons." Sora deduced to herself "What else could possibly be in them? Oh well, I'm not here to look in boxes so this room is no good to me."

Sora turned around and crawled back out into the main shaft and headed towards the second tunnel way. Unfortunately, she had another obstacle to overcome. There was a large fan in between the first tunnel way and the second tunnel way. When activated, this would blow all the cool air through the ventilation shaft and cool the base down. Luckily for Sora, it wasn't activated so she wouldn't get chopped to pieces by it. It did seem awfully narrow and hard to squeeze through but Sora was only a little girl and she was slim and slender so this wasn't going to be much of a problem for her. Sora lay down flat on her stomach and she squeezed through a tight gap between the blades. The gap was tight and Sora was only just slim enough to get through it. Sora wriggled and squirmed her way through the gap and she popped out through the other side of the fan. Sora flattened down her ruffled up fur and she continued crawling.

"Just wait until I hit my adult years." she said to herself "I won't be

able to get through a gap that tight anymore."

Sora turned to her left and went down the second tunnel. The second tunnel stretched forward and around to link with the first tunnel, a detail Sora was annoyed at for not noticing before as she could have avoided having to squeeze through the fan by going through the first tunnel and all the way around to the second tunnel. Sora crawled through the tunnel until she noticed a grate on her right hand side. Sora pressed her body down low and she crept over to the grate, slithering like a snake across the metal floors. She reached the grate and she peered through it. This room looked more promising as it actually had something in it. It was an office room with a desk and a computer. There wasn't much else in it other then the fact there were two reptiles in the office, both dressed in traditional region armour. One was a frill necked lizard who was coloured purple and had a blue frill and the other was an iguana who was very tall and very skinny, skinny to the point that Sora wondered if he even ate anything at all. Sora eagerly watched those reptiles to see if she could learn anything from them. The reptiles weren't doing anything right now except for taping on the lone computer in the room. The frill-necked lizard was on the computer whereas the iguana was sitting next to him. He looked a little bored right now.

"Hey Kieran, don't you ever get bored of this job?" asked the iguana "I mean all you have to do is sit there and type on that thing 24/7. Surely you must wanna do something a little more interesting."

"I would actually Nuka." muttered the frill-necked lizard who's name was Kieran "But we were assigned to be document reptiles and that's the end of it. We're meant to document the Region's current activity and nothing less."

"I know, it's just so goddamn boring!" whined Nuka, throwing his skinny arms up and then throwing them back down in an exasperated manned "All the other reptiles have fun in this stinkin' region so why can't we?"

"Because we're meant to document the region's actions and the events that happen because of them." snapped Kieran "Document reptiles do not get involved in the battlefield. That's the rule of the region and we follow the rules regardless of what they are."

"Just a pity Diesel hasn't decided to change the rules now he's in charge." grumbled Nuka "I'd much prefer it if he did. Oh well, he's a much better leader then Lord Sycorax ever was. He doesn't waste team admiring himself and he actually thinks about others. He's a lot more compassionate then that egotistical jerk and I like that. Just a pity not everyone can agree on that."

"Some reptiles prefer Lord Sycorax, some don't." replied Kieran "But we reptiles have to serve our leader, regardless of who it is. I couldn't care less if somebody did break Lord Sycorax out of prison, I'm happy to serve any leader as long as we have a leader."

"If only we were all so easy to please." said Nuka "Oh well, nobody's perfect as they say. As for Vladek and Romeo, do you think they'll finally accept Diesel as leader?"

"They will in time." said Kieran "If not then Diesel will make them accept him. Nobody gets on the wrong side of that Komodo Dragon."

"You got that right Kieran!" chuckled Nuka "Mess with him and you get floored, seriously floored! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

After listening to this discussion, Sora came to the conclusion that they probably weren't the kind of reptiles she should be eavesdropping on. They didn't seem to know anything about what was going on as they didn't mention anything about the rumours to one another. Sora decided to stick around no longer and try another room. Sora turned around and crawled back out into the main shaft once again. Unfortunately, trouble was about to begin for her. Nuka wiped his forehead and he puffed slightly.

"Phew, it's getting a bit stuffy in here." he said "Mind if I put the air con on?"

"Not at all Nuka, I'm getting a bit warm too." said Kieran "Curse that Lord Sycorax for making us wear these uniforms all the time! No wonder we're always getting hot in this base!"

Nuka nodded agreeably and he stood up from his chair. He walked over to the air conditioning controls and he switched the air con on.

Unfortunately for Sora, that meant the fans were going to turn on and cool air was going to blow through the shaft. There was another fan further up the main shaft and that began to spin around, blowing cool air into Sora's face. Sora felt the sudden draft and began to wonder what was going on.

"That's strange, there's cool air in here." noted Sora "There wasn't before. But if there's cool air in here…then that means the air conditioning is on!"

That was never a good sign for anyone crawling through a ventilation shaft. The fan further up the shaft was spinning at top speed and the fan Sora had squeezed through earlier was spinning too. The cool air blowing in Sora's face was like a strong breeze and it began to push her backwards towards the fan behind her! The two spinning fans were spinning at top speed and Sora was getting pulled towards one! If she didn't get out and fast then she would be chopped to pieces! Sora clutched the floor desperately but the force of the cool air was too strong for her. She was slowly but surely being dragged towards the fan behind her.

"Oh no! Oh no! I'm getting blown towards the fan!" shrieked Sora "I'm going to get chopped up if I don't stop the fan and quick!"

The fan made an ominous whirr as it continued to spin ferociously. Sora could just feel the blowing air from the fan behind her on her tail. Her tail was too close to the blades for comfort. If her tail got so much as an inch closer to the fan, it would carve it to pieces and the result would be Sora getting sucked into the fan and churned into tiny bite-sized chunks. Many spies of the M.S.I.U. had fallen this way and Sora was not about to become another victim of the fan. Luckily, Sora had a way of stopping the fan. She pulled an orb off of her belt, pressed something and threw it at the fan. The orb was sliced to pieces by the fan but the moment it was penetrated, an electrical surge appeared from the orb and surged through the fan, frying it's circuitry as it did so. It didn't just shock this fan, the surge spread throughout the shaft and began to short-circuit the other fan further up the shaft. The orb Sora had just thrown into the fan was an EMP bomb that short-circuited anything electrical within a good distance once it was activated and broken. The two fans were both short-circuited by the bomb and within a moment or two, their blades

stopped spinning and the whole thing ground to a halt. The air stopped blowing and Sora was no longer being dragged towards the fan. She was safe for now. The fans were never going to work again until someone fixed them. Sora slumped on the cold metal floor and breathed a heavy sigh of relief . She placed a hand over her chest, feeling her thumping heartbeat.

"Oh thank goodness I bought an EMP bomb!" gasped Sora loudly "I would have become bite-sized fox chunks if I hadn't! I never wanna get into a situation with fans again!"

She allowed herself to catch her breath again before getting up on her knees and crawling further up the shaft. She squeezed through the second fan much like how she squeezed through the first fan and crawled on through the shaft until she reached the third tunnel. She turned to her left and went through the tunnel way. She crawled through the tunnel and to the grate that was on her right hand side and then she peered through the grate, wondering what was in THIS room. To her disappointment though, this was yet another office but there wasn't anybody in the office. It was empty and Sora had a feeling the worked had only popped out for a bit and that he was going to return again so she didn't want to investigate this room in fear of being caught. Instead of turning around and going back, Sora crawled on through the shaft as this shaft went all the way around and liked to the fourth shaft that was around the corner of the main shaft. Sora crawled through the shaft until she reached the fourth tunnel way and she came across a grate on her left hand side. As she neared the grate though, she could hear voices. Loud reptilian sounding voices. It sounded like there was a conversation going on in the room. Sora crawled onto the grate and she peered through it. She took an orb off her belt, which was her special and very handy orb-cam, and she photographed the scene before her. The scene she was looking at right now was just what she was hoping to see. Some Reptile Rebels in a room together discussing seminal matters. Diesel the Komodo Dragon was sitting in the head chair and he was talking to a bunch of reptiles that sat around a large round table with him. Vladek and Romeo were at the end of the table and the discussion seemed more between them and Diesel. Sora listened on intently, wondering what they were talking about.

"You two are the embodiment of completely mental!" bellowed Diesel angrily "Rescuing Lord Sycorax as a foolish idea and I refuse to carry out this feeble little idea of yours you two!"

"Fie! Rescuing Lord Sycorax is a good idea!" retorted Romeo "Lord Sycorax is the heart and soul of this region!"

"Remember, he's the one that formed the region in the first bloody place!" yelled Vladek, his frill raised angrily "We wouldn't all be together plotting schemes against governments if it wasn't for him!"

"He was a terrible leader and you both know it!" snapped Diesel, slamming the table angrily "He was way too full of himself, far too egotistical and blind to our needs whenever we had any! He only cares about himself and as a result, we suffer and he benefits from this! Whereas under my watch, the region is stronger and I care about my soldiers unlike that big lumbering scaly clunk-head Lord Sycorax who thinks that the world revolves around him and that our needs do not matter!"

"You're one to talk about egotism you brainless toad!" snarled Vladek "You're just as vain and arrogant as Lord Sycorax was!"

"Not to mention you think strength is everything whereas Lord Sycorax cared about strength AND intelligence!" noted Romeo "If you carry this on, the region will be nothing but mindless brutes with no sense of calculation, strategy or planning whatsoever! The region will be in collapse and it'll be because of you relying too heavily on fists and not brains!"

Diesel just gave Romeo a very grey expression that suggested he wasn't pleased with Romeo's testimony.

"Would any of you morons like to concur with Romeo's testimony?" asked Diesel in a dangerous sounding soft voice.

The Reptile Rebels began to murmur amongst each other, wondering what kind of answer they should give. Diesel just scowled at them as if to say "Hurry up will you?" and the Reptile Rebels gave him an answer. They all shook their heads in unison, meaning that they didn't want to concur with Romeo. Diesel smiled at the reptiles

and then he turned his attention back to Romeo and Vladek.

"Well my idiotic reptiles, it seems nobody agrees with you." gloated Diesel "The Region of Rebellious Reptiles is strong and if we don't focus on strength, we can't be as strong as we wish to be. Besides, what good does intelligence do you anyway? It only slows you down when you have to make pointless calculations and you pay too much attention to detail when you could just be launching your attacks right now."

"You Diesel really are stupid!" shouted Vladek "The brain is the mightiest weapon of all and if the Region is to live up to Lord Sycorax's expression then we should be strong AND smart at the same time!"

"Well Lord Sycorax ain't in charge anymore is he?" thundered Diesel "He blew his chance to be leader by allowing himself to get defeated due to his stupidity so I'M in charge and nothing is going to change that!"

"Fie!" snapped Romeo "We refuse to accept someone as stupid as you as our leader and we want Lord Sycorax back!"

"Too bad!" retorted Diesel "The Region follows my rules and my rules only as I'm leader now and I say this, anyone who so much as thinks about rescuing Lord Sycorax will be tried for treason…and executed!"

"Oh, so rescuing our leader, our TRUE leader, is treasonous is it?" roared Vladek "I think preventing anyone from rescuing him is treason in it's own right Diesel so you can't possibly try us for treason when we're in the right and you are in the wrong!"

"Yes I bloody well can you two clots!" bellowed Diesel "The rules of the Region clearly state that the leader makes the decisions and the decisions of the leader are the only decisions that carry any weight amongst the rebellion, no one else's, so there! The entire region is forbidden to try and save Lord Sycorax and anyone who does will have their hearts torn out and eaten! Is that clear?"

Vladek and Romeo both growled in frustration and they slammed

their heads on the table in annoyance. They lifted their heads up and Vladek spoke slowly to the crowd.

"No." said Vladek "I will not be bossed around by an incompetent leader such as yourself. Henceforth, since you're betraying the true leader of the region, I resign out of protest. The region was supposed to be enjoyable for everybody but this reptile isn't having any enjoyment at all."

"I resign too." said Romeo "Vladek goes, I go too."

The whole room filled with a chorus of surprised gasping, even from Sora who had listened in on the whole discussion. Diesel in particular looked like he'd been smacked around the chops so much that they wouldn't close anymore.

"You…you can't do that!" protested Diesel.

"Yes we can." said Vladek "Rule 43 of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles clearly states that reptiles who don't enjoy the region are free to leave under their own circumstances. This rule cannot be countermanded, even if the leader is any different."

"Goodbye Diesel." said Romeo in a flat tone that showed he harboured no care for the Komodo Dragon anymore "I hope you're happy you've just caused two of your best soldiers to leave."

With that said, Vladek and Romeo both got out of their chairs and they stormed out of the room in pure anger and upset. The door opened up and closed behind them as they left the room. Sora decided to leave too as there was nothing else to spy on and she wanted to see what Romeo and Vladek were up to. Diesel was so shocked at what had just happened, the Komodo Dragon couldn't even speak. Even the crowd had fallen into an ominous silence. It was as if the whole affair had just stunned them into silence.

"I can't believe it!" cursed Diesel "Those two gits just decided to quit just because they don't like me! Well it's their loss! I'm trying to improve the region and they're just too obstinate to move on and forget about that idiot Lord Sycorax! Well let this be a lesson to anyone still in the region. Anyone quitting the region from now on

will be executed. Understood?"

"Yes." said the reptiles in the room.

"Good." said Diesel "As for Romeo and Vladek, we'll just let them kill themselves trying to rescue Lord Sycorax. After all, a prison break is pretty much an invitation to suicide."

The Komodo Dragon fumed to himself, still angry Romeo and Vladek dared to leave him. Well thanks to his new rule, nobody else would be leaving him and the Region would obey his every command from now on, regardless of what it was.

Meanwhile, Romeo and Vladek had stormed out into the wall and Sora had followed the vent shafts all the way back to the hall so she could spy on them. Despite the fact she was in a dark metal tunnel, she could still hear what they were saying outside the shaft. Romeo and Vladek stood by the first door which had the ventilation shaft grate Sora opened to get into the shaft, not noticing it was laying on the floor and the screws had melted, and they began to talk to each other. Sora had reached the start of the shaft again and she lay flat on the floor, listening with interest to their conversation.

"I'm amazed that Lord Sycorax let this idiot into the region in the first place!" ranted Vladek "Diesel is all muscle and no brains, never before have I seen such a terrible soldier! Brains and muscle are both required to be a soldier, not one over the other! And to think we thought he was going to be better then Lord Sycorax! What idiots we were!"

"I agree Vladek." said Romeo "Which is why we decided to fake our resigns, so we can rescue Lord Sycorax and Diesel won't bother about us since we're not even in the Region anymore and he won't think we're going to try to help Lord Sycorax. After all, we've resigned so why would we do anything for the region? That's how it would look in their eyes."

Sora could hardly believe her ears. The rumours were true! There was a plot to break Lord Sycorax out of prison and Romeo and Vladek were the ones that were going to do it! Queen Sally Acorn would be thrilled to hear that (not!) once she gave the news to her

and M.S.I.U. headquarters!

"How are we going to help Lord Sycorax anyway?" asked Vladek "We know where he is, he got relocated to a prison in Nekronopolis after the one in Empire City got destroyed by a fiend called Scourge the Hedgehog********* but how do we get in?"

"Simple, we turn ourselves in and fake surrendering and then we infiltrate the prison from within." said Romeo "We break Lord Sycorax out and then he can give Diesel his comeuppance for his treachery and selfishness."

"It maybe risky but I'm going to try anything it takes to get Lord Sycorax out of prison." said Vladek in a loyal tone "I will not leave our glorious leader behind bars forever."

Sora had listened to ever word that had escaped their lips and she smiled an unusually devious smile to herself.

Boy am I glad I picked the right time to spy on them! she thought to herself *Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to find out this interesting bit of information. Once I tell Castle Acorn and M.S.I.U. what I've heard, those reptiles' sinister plot will fail miserably! And all because of me, Sora Sumdac, the star agent of the M.S.I.U.*

Unfortunately for Sora, it seemed she wasn't going to get out of this base alive. As Romeo and Vladek talked, Vladek stepped backwards and his foot brushed lightly over the grate that lay on the floor beside the open shaft. Vladek felt the grate as his foot brushed over it and he looked down at the floor to see what it was. He was rather confused to see the grate lying on the floor instead of being screwed to the wall like it should be. Vladek picked up the grate and he looked at it. The grate dripped with liquid metal from when Sora had melted the screws earlier. The frill-necked lizard couldn't understand why the grate was lying on the floor and why the screws had just melted.

"Hey Romeo, this grate's been removed and the screws have melted." said Vladek, showing the red chameleon the grate.

Sora face-palmed herself in annoyance. How did she manage to

forget to put the grate back up after crawling into the shaft? She'd just inadvertently given herself away because of this blunder! Romeo peered at the grate and he instantly grew suspicious.

"I have a sneaky feeling that someone's sticking their nose in where it doesn't belong." hissed Romeo dryly "I'll look in the shaft and see what I can find."

With that said, Romeo stuck his head into the ventilation shaft and he crawled into it. The moment he did, he saw Sora staring in horror at him with her back against the wall. She was well and truly trapped now and she'd just been found out! She was dead meat now! Romeo's eyes flared with anger and his teeth bore furiously.

"Intruder!" he thundered angrily "We have an intruder in the ventilation shaft!"

He crawled up to Sora and tried to grab the frightened fox but Sora bent down on her knees and bit him on the wrist to make him back off like an angry fox defending it's territory from a hunting dog or rival fox. Romeo screamed in pain and he straightened up quickly, only to clonk himself on the ceiling as the shaft was miles too small for him to stand up straight in. Not even Sora could stand up straight in the shaft and she was smaller then Romeo. Romeo backed out of the shaft, clutching his wrist tenderly and rubbing it furiously as it throbbed like mad. He then alternated between rubbing his wrist and his aching head as he'd clonked it on the ceiling. This gave Sora the opportunity to try and dive out of the ventilation shaft but just as she ran for it, Vladek lunged at her and grabbed her by the tail. Sora yelped as she was lifted off the floor by her tail and then suddenly, Vladek pinned her to the wall by her throat. Sora gagged and she struggled in Vladek's tight grasp. The fox's heart pounded like mad. She had just been caught by two region deserters and now they were likely going to kill her so she couldn't foil their plan on saving Lord Sycorax from the prison life. How was she going to get out of this one? Romeo and Vladek glared at Sora with their icy, reptilian stares.

"Gotcha!" said Vladek in a cold voice "Gotcha you filthy, nosy little spy!"

"What do you think you're doing here you scrounging little merchant?" snarled Romeo "Spying on the Region of Rebellious Reptiles so you can give away our hiding place? Or so you can stop us from rescuing Lord Sycorax? Well little girl, you will not leave this place alive!"

"Oh please, I beg of you, spare my life! Please!" begged Sora pathetically "I w-w-wasn't spying on you, honestly! I-I-I-I was just on a sc-scouting mission and I…I got lost and accidentally came across your hiding place! I wasn't spying on any of you!"

"Do you really think we hatched from the eggshells of idiotness?" snarled Vladek "We're not thick you know! You're a spy and you're spying on us! What have you found out while you were here?"

"Nothing!" squeaked Sora quickly "Honestly, nothing!"

"Lies!" yelled Romeo "You've been listening in on our conversation all this time haven't you?"

"No, no I h-h-h-haven't!" stammered Sora, her forehead raining with sweat and her heart pounding so fast she thought she was going to suddenly pass out in Vladek's hands "I've only just arrived to this part of the base! I didn't arrive in time to hear anything!"

"You are such a disgusting little liar you are you wretched little brat!" growled Vladek "Well we don't believe a word you're saying because we're not gullible enough to believe the lies of a trampy little super spy! You will not leave this base alive little girl, I am going to kill you and feed you to Lord Sycorax once we break him out!"

"No! No you can't! Please, spare me, I beg of you!" screamed Sora.

"Vladek, just eviscerate the child already." said Romeo in annoyance "Her pleas are beginning to irk me."

Vladek obeyed and he prepared to rip Sora's throat open with his bare claws. Desperate to save herself, Sora yanked the pen knife she used for cutting windows off her belt and she plunged the blade into Vladek's lower arm. Vladek screamed a bloodcurdling scream of agonising pain and he let go of Sora so he could yank the knife out

of his arm. The knife had left a pretty mild wound that would need bandaging up. Sora snatched her knife back off Vladek, sheathed it and then head-butted him in the stomach. Vladek fell down onto his knees, gasping hoarsely and clutching his throbbing arm. Romeo tried to grab Sora but Sora dodged his lunge and she roundhouse kicked him in the head. She then proceeded to give him a left and right hook each and then another roundhouse kick that knocked Romeo over onto his back.

"Nobody tries to kill me and gets away with it!" yelled Sora as she ran past Romeo, the chameleon groaning in pain as he lay on the ground "You'd be wise to remember that or I'll get you back good and hard!"

Sora then decided now was a good time to run like hell so she headed for the automatic door as fast as her legs could carry her. Vladek however, had an idea on how to stop her.

"Auto-door, lock yourself!" he bellowed to the automatic door.

"Voice approved. Commencing lockdown." droned a computer voice from above the automatic door.

The doors in the Region of Rebellious Reptiles base were voice activated and would lock themselves and unlock themselves at the simple command of lock or unlock. Sora ran into the door but it didn't open for Vladek had just told them to lock themselves. Sora banged on the door furiously and tried to get it to open but it wouldn't open. Romeo and Vladek picked themselves up and they advanced on Sora menacingly. Sora screamed in fright and frantically cried out.

"Door, unlock yourself!" she squealed frantically.

"Voice denied." said the door.

Sora thumped the door crossly. The door would only respond to members of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles! She was absolutely trapped in this base now! Oh how this mission could have been better if she didn't get found out! Sora turned around and saw Romeo and Vladek coming towards her. They both had sinister

reptilian smiles on their scaly faces and they were ready to rip her apart. Sora just pressed her back against the door in fear and shivered like crazy. Then suddenly, she calmed down and stopped shivering. She had suddenly come up with an idea, and a very good one at that. The two reptiles bore over Sora and they grinned like maniacs at her.

"You're trapped now sweetheart!" sneered Romeo "The doors will lock and unlock by our simple voice commands and Vladek's told them to lock so they've locked! You're not going to get out of this one!"

"Oh yes I am." said Sora with a sly smirk on her face.

The two reptiles just laughed at her mockingly. This spy was clearly deranged in their eyes as she had no hope of escape and yet she begins bluffing while she has minutes to live.

"What gobble funk are you talking you crazy fox?" jeered Vladek "You're trapped, you have no back up and we have you at our mercy, you can't possibly get out of this one!"

"Do I look like the kind of girl who never has an escape plan?" said Sora slyly, her sly smirk getting even wider.

"Um…yes?" said Vladek unsurely.

"Well in that case, you two are a bunch of dolts." sneered Sora.

She then proceeded to take her submarine orb off her belt and threw it at them. The orb sailed past Romeo and Vladek and it pinged off the floor like a little marble being thrown at the floor. The orb then expanded to a great size and converted into the portable submarine that the M.S.I.U. was famous for. Vladek and Romeo stared in astonishment at the submarine, unable to believe this vehicle had just converted from a tiny marble into a big, spherical submarine.

"Holy crocodile tears!" cried Romeo "That is amazing technology right there! Why don't we have one of those?"

"Because my organization far excels in technology then a mere group of rascally reptilian anarchists." taunted Sora.

She then jumped up in between Romeo and Vladek and she split kicked them, knocking them both down onto their sides. Sora then ran over to the submarine and she leaped into it quickly. The submarine was going to be pretty useless up on land but Sora wasn't trying to swim away in it. The submarine had hidden weapons and some of these weapons could be used on land too. Sora pressed a button on the control pad that deployed a pair of laser cannons, one on each side, out from the submarine's sides. Sora grabbed the joysticks and she fired the laser cannons. The lasers blasted the doors down in an instant but the resulting blast set off an alarm that blared throughout the entire base. Sora hadn't anticipated for this to happen and she had to get away now before the whole region was set on her. She's never get away from the whole region if that happened. Sora climbed out of the submarine and she shrunk it back down to size so she could carry it to the water outside. Sora ran straight out of the base and headed to the sea as fast as she could. Romeo and Vladek picked themselves up only to realize that Sora was escaping but they were much too late. Sora was already down by the water by the time they noticed her and she threw the submarine orb into the water. The orb landed into the water with a splash and Sora dived in after it. The orb bobbed slightly on the surface of the water. Sora grabbed the orb and expanded it to its submarine size again. After the orb transformed into submarine mode again, Sora scrambled quickly into the cockpit and set the engines to go. Romeo and Vladek ran out to the dock point only to see Sora in her submarine and preparing to get away. They could only stand there and let the spy escape though as they didn't have any weapons to sink the submarine on them and by the time they did, she would be deep down under and well away from the base by then. The submarine's engines started up and the propellers began spinning around at top speed. The submarine submerged underwater and it sailed away deep down under the dark night time ocean as fast as its propellers would let it. Romeo and Vladek watched the submarine get away and they furiously cursed their bad luck.

"Damn it!" cursed Vladek "Damn it to the lizard king! That stupid little kid got away! Now she's going to tell everybody what we two are up to! Lord Sycorax will never get out of prison now!"

"Wrong my friend." said Romeo with a smile on his face that was even slyer then the one Sora could do.

"What the slag do you mean "Wrong my friend?"?" shrieked Vladek angrily "She spied on us! She knows what we're going to do! She knows that we're plotting to break Lord Sycorax out! She'll tell everybody about this plot and then we'll never break Lord Sycorax out of prison!"

"We will Vladek my friend." said Romeo with a sinister expression that made Vladek feel nervous "Because what that kid is going to tell everybody is going to be a lie."

"Will you explain yourself for the love of Downunda?" shouted Vladek "You're not making any sense!"

"Now the spy knows what we're plotting, we're going to CHANGE the plot." explained Romeo "Everybody will think we're going to turn ourselves in and then break Sycorax out once we get in. Instead, we'll just bust the prison down and get Lord Sycorax out that way. We'll buy our time though in order to throw the cops off a little."

"Ah, now you're talking sense!" cackled Vladek, rubbing his hands evilly "Everybody will believe that spy and once we carry out the new plan instead of the original plan, they'll be furious with her and accuse her of deception! Oh, ho, ho, ho! You are a genius Romeo!"

"Indeed I am." gloated Romeo "Lord Sycorax's return to duty is ascertain and Diesel's dethrone is ascertain too."

With that said, the two reptiles began to cackle maniacally to themselves. Sora may have found out their plan, but they were trying a different plan in order to make her look like a liar and to throw everybody off their trial. They would never see them coming at all…

The next morning, Sora arrived at Castle Acorn, the only standing building left from the original Mobotropolis before Eggman levelled it with his battleship**********. After her successful mission and near

death-experience, Sora had arrived back at headquarters to tell them everything she had found out. The M.S.I.U. were pleased to hear that Sora had found out what the Region of Rebellious Reptiles was up to and now they knew what was going on, they began informing all the MPD stations and all the political parties around the planet. Sora was tasked with informing Castle Acorn about her recent discovery. She arrived at the castle and knocked on the door. The castle's lady-in waiting and Mobotropolis beauty Nicole the Lynx answered the door and was slightly taken aback at the arrival of such a young girl at their doorstep. She must be here for something important.

"Oh, hello there little girl." said Nicole politely "How may I help you?"

"Is her majesty Queen Sally Acorn in at all?" asked Sora "It's imperative I see her immediately."

"She's just in the throne room." said Nicole "I'll take you to her right away love."

Nicole let Sora into the castle and she led the young super spy to the throne room where Queen Sally was sitting. The squirrel queen was wearing a gorgeous purple dress of true radiance that was trimmed in gold around the hem (Sally does like to change her dresses day after day). Her hair was styled in a lovely fashion too. Sally was just as surprised to see a twelve-year old girl in her presence as Nicole was but she kept her astonishment under control and kept her face straight.

"Hello there little one." said Sally politely.

"Your Majesty." said Sora with a polite bow before the queen "It is a pleasure to meet the ruler of Mobotropolis in person at long last."

"Aw, is it?" chuckled Sally in a flattered tone "Aren't you lovely? Ahem, what brings you to Castle Acorn then little one?"

"My name is Sora Sumdac, head agent of the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit." Sora introduced "I've been sent on behalf of my organization to inform you with some grave news."

"Oh, an M.S.I.U. spy." said Sally happily "I've heard of the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit. Their agents have saved the lives of Castle Acorn and the people of Mobius more times then I can count. It's nice to see one of you again."

"Thank you, I'm pleased to hear that." said Sora politely "Anyways, I've just been on a mission last night and I've discovered some sinister goings on amongst the Region of Rebellious Reptiles."

"Oh no! Not those insidious politic purges again!" shrieked Sally, her cheerful expression switching into a frightened one "What are those scaly scoundrels up to now?"

"Two members known as Vladek and Romeo, a frill-necked lizard and a chameleon respectively and both red in colour, are plotting to break out their incarcerated leader Lord Sycorax." explained Sora "The current leader, Diesel, doesn't even want to rescue Lord Sycorax so the two were forced to fake resigning in order to have the freedom to do what they want. They're going to turn themselves in and pretend to surrender so they can infiltrate the prison from the inside out and therefore, break Lord Sycorax out. My organization has sent agents everywhere to warn all political landmarks and Mobian Police Department stations and our allies from the Secret Intelligence and Information Department are helping us inform everybody so don't worry, everything's in good hands and those reptiles will be forced to abandon their objective and should they try anything else, I'll find out what they're plotting again."

Sally and Nicole were both amazed to hear this and they couldn't believe what Romeo and Vladek were plotting. Breaking Lord Sycorax out of prison was going to be a heavy wound on the world of democracy indeed so they had to ensure he stayed arrested at any cost.

"Thank you ever so much for this information Miss Sumdac." said Sally "Thanks to you, we know what the region is up to and we shall counter it. I'll make sure no prison on Mobius arrests Vladek and Romeo as that is what they want them to do. I'll be sure to give everybody your regards Sora. Thank you and your organization for your cooperation once again."

"You are welcome your majesty." said Sora "The M.S.I.U. is always happy to eavesdrop on villainous conversations for the sake of everybody's lives."

"And just by eavesdropping on those reptiles, you'll have prevented the region from rescuing their leader and therefore, ensure the region stays at its weakest." said Nicole "The region won't be as powerful as it once was without their leader."

"I couldn't agree more." said Sora with a smile on her face "I look forward to seeing Vladek and Romeo's expressions when their plan fails miserably for them."

How wrong was Sora though. The two reptiles had a back-up plan and they were going to unleash it at a time no one would have predicted. Sora's attempts to prevent Lord Sycorax's breakout may have been all for nothing as the region leader's breakout was going to commence without delay after all...

Footnotes:

***See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 90-93 for the whole saga!**

**** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 80-83**

***** See the previous arc (Arc 10: Pain in Megapolis)**

****** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 68-69**

******* See Arc 9: New Recruits**

******** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 71-74**

********* See Arc 7: Rebellious Reptiles**

********** See Arc 6: The Five Festivals of Chun-Nan**

*********** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 89**

************ See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Story 2**

Well Sora tried didn't she? Unfortunately, her attempts have been in vain as Romeo and Vladek have a change of plan. Can Sora foil that or is it doomed to work? And if it does, what will Diesel have to say about this? Join me next time for Part 2 when the breakout begins! Reviews are welcome. As always. :)

Stratagem of the Reptiles 2

Arc 11: Stratagem of the Reptiles

Takes place five months after Story 93 and a month before Story 94

Part 2: Prison Break

"So two members of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles are plotting to break out their incarcerated leader eh?" mused the warden of the Nekronopolis MPD station in the city of Nekronopolis, home of the Northern Royal Fighters and Silver the Hedgehog and Blaze the Cat's home in the future "Well those two have got one thing coming, thinking they can attempt something like this! No one escapes from Nekronopolis Prison, nobody!"

The warden was an adult Mobian badger in his late forties who wore a traditional police outfit. He was one of the toughest wardens around and he took his job so seriously, you wouldn't believe it. Right now, he was being visited by the young super spy Sora Sumdac, head agent of the M.S.I.U. She had just recently discovered that Romeo the Chameleon and Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard were plotting to rescue the incarcerated leader of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles Lord Sycorax. Their plan was to allow themselves to be arrested and then infiltrate the prison from the inside out and break out Lord Sycorax. Sora however had discovered this and had informed Queen Sally Acorn first at hand. The rest of her organization and their allies the S.I.I.D. were informing the Royals and MPD stations all over so that no one would fall for their plot or arrest them under any circumstances. Sora was the only agent free to inform Nekronopolis so she was informing them on what they were up to. Now the warden knew about this, he was in on Romeo and Vladek's plot and had decided he was going to stand firm against them. After Sora told him everything, he turned around and barked at his officers.

"Attention ladies and gentleman!" he bellowed "A brilliant little super

spy from the M.S.I.U. has discovered a deadly plot involving the breakout of Lord Sycorax! You all know who he is of course. Two members of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles named Romeo and Vladek respectively are the ones behind it. If you see a red chameleon and a red frill-necked lizard both wearing blue combat suits, kill them on sight! Do not hesitate or ask questions or arrest them, just shoot them quick. Understood?"

"Yes Warden Maverick." said the officers in unison.

"That's the kind of stuff I like to hear, devotion to duty." said Warden Maverick happily "That is all officers, you may return to your duties now."

The officers did as they were told and continued with their duties. Pleased that they had understood him, Warden Maverick turned back to Sora and looked down at her from his great height. He was a very tall badger after all.

"I can't thank you spies enough for all you go through just to keep Mobius' biggest villains arrested." he said brightly in a voice that sounded funny coming out from a tough, no nonsense warden like him.

"No thanks necessary sir." said Sora "I'm just doing my job. I do hope that Lord Sycorax never escapes this prison. He doesn't deserve to roam free."

"I couldn't agree more dear child." said Maverick, scowling at the mere thought of him "I can't stand anarchism; it's just pointless anger over something that the world needs to keep us from being savage and wild."

"Politics are important after all." said Sora "Who knows what kind of stuff would be going on now if governments didn't exist? Wars would break out, the strong would prey upon the weak and nothing can be done about because there's nothing to reign us in and keep us under control."

"Indeed my child." said Maverick in agreement "I hope that stupid region burns in a fire or something like that. And because their

leader's in prison the region will be in a bit of a fix won't they? No one will be around to give them orders, make the plans, fight the resistance and keep them in ranks."

"They do have a replacement named Diesel the Komodo Dragon but he harbours no interest in rescuing Sycorax, he just wants power for himself." explained Sora "But judging from what I've learnt while spying on the region last night, he's an incompetent leader and unworthy of the position. All brawns and no brains, terrible combo really."

"What's the point having all this strength if you have no idea how to use it properly?" said Maverick "It's better to have your strength and intelligence evenly balanced or you will be one poor warrior. If this Diesel is their replacement and he's all muscle and no brain then the Region really is no threat anymore."

"Perhaps." said Sora thoughtfully.

She then thought on something for a moment. The Region of Rebellious Reptiles maybe, a region full of rebellious reptiles that destroy whatever it is they're rebelling against, could there be a slight glimmer of hope that they could be…redeemed? Maybe someone could talk some sense into Lord Sycorax and get him to realize the error of his ways and turn over a new leaf? And hopefully he could convince the other reptiles to disband the region and reform themselves as decent, civilized people? It was a foolish thing to hope, but it was worth a shot. Sora even had some ideas on how to make Lord Sycorax change his ways. They mostly involved something evil like lying and manipulating but it was for the greater good so it wouldn't matter. Sora decided she would give it a go.

"Warden Maverick sir?" she asked.

"Yes Sora?" asked Maverick.

"This may sound foolish but, have any of you considered trying to redeem Lord Sycorax at all?"

"No we haven't child." said Maverick with a frown on his face "Even if we had; we're not going to try something that is guaranteed not to

work. Redeeming that crazy crocodile is about as likely as the sky turning purple."

"Well, I just thought about that idea and I thought I would like to give it a go." said Sora "I wish to see Lord Sycorax and see if I can get him to deter from his wicked ways and defer to the side of good."

"Certainly not!" snapped Maverick "This idea is the embodiment of foolishness! That heathen will sooner eat you for breakfast then listen to you trying to preach morality to him! I reject this idea Miss Sora and you will go nowhere near that politic hating swamp sucker!"

Sora frowned at Maverick. She'd come up with a great idea and Maverick won't even let her try it! So much for "You don't know if you don't try."! Well, this super spy was not willing to give up.

"Warden, please let me try." said Sora "I have some good ideas on how to get him to change. Diesel's disloyalty to him may even play into my ideas perfectly. I could trick him into thinking the region has deserted him and then I can tempt him into joining the R.F.S. and get revenge on his former lackeys. Please, let me try to sway Lord Sycorax over to the good, please."

Maverick put a finger to his chin and considered for a moment. On the one hand, he was not willing to let a super spy risk her life just to try and get Sycorax to turn back good but the spy had a plan and it might just work. If it didn't then at least she tried, that's all that mattered. The badger sighed briefly before turning back to Sora and speaking to her.

"I must be out of my mind for this, but I accept your proposal." he said grumpily "But you'd better be careful in there, Lord Sycorax is unpredictable and who knows what he'll do to you."

"I'm a spy, danger is my speciality sir." said Sora "I'll brave any kind of danger for the greater good."

Maverick nodded and he led Sora into the MPD station. He took Sora through the checkout and into the cell blockade where all the prisoners were kept. The moment Sora walked into the cell

blockade, her expression changed and the fox began to feel nervous. The blockade was full of cells and had about four floors of them. The inmates were all murderous, monstrous, savage looking beings that looked like something from a child's horror story. They were all Mobians but even Mobians could have monstrous looking beings. Some of the inmates were pretty grotesque in appearance, some even looking like they had been mutated in comparison to a normal Mobian! Sora shivered at the mere sight of them. Thank goodness she never had to spy on any of those inmates! One inmate who was a tall and skinny weasel with sharp claws and pointy teeth smiled devilishly at Sora in an attempt to make her jump as it could sense her fear. Sora didn't even look at the inmate, much to its dismay. The warden led Sora on and on through the blockade until he reached Cell 34, the very cell that Lord Sycorax was being held in. The region leader was just sitting at the back of his cell with his back turned on everybody. He was the only inmate in the prison who looked normal at least much to Sora's relief but he was still just as evil as the rest of them.

"I'm so glad we had a cell spare for him." said Maverick "After the Empire City MPD station was knocked down*, Melchett desperately searched for a prison to put Lord Sycorax in and I was happy to have him. He's gone unusually quiet for some reason. Maybe this prison scares him a little."

"I wouldn't be surprised if it did." said Sora dryly, trying not to look at the other cells in the blockade as the inmates in them looked way too scary for her.

"I'm letting you into his cell so that you may try what you can." said Maverick "When you want to be let out, just bang on the door and I'll let you out. Be careful in there Sora, that crocodile is dangerous you know."

"I do know." said Sora grimly "He's the Region leader after all."

Maverick nodded bitterly and he opened Lord Sycorax's cell door. Sora stepped cautiously into the cell and Maverick shut the door behind her. This briefly made Sora a little nervous as she was now trapped in a prison cell with the region leader but she reminded herself the warden was on hand to let her out so she wasn't in

danger of any kind. Sora swallowed nervously and she crept over to Lord Sycorax, the crocodile keeping his attention fixed at the wall still. Sora stopped just in front of Lord Sycorax, not trusting herself to go right up to him and tap him on the shoulder, and she cleared her throat.

"H-hello there." she said slowly.

Lord Sycorax's head jerked around sharply, making Sora jump in alarm and he growled at her furiously. The look he had in his eyes was heart-stopping and Sora felt giddy looking at him. It was quite clear he was annoyed at the fact he had a child in his cell.

"What are you doing in my cell you little brat?" snarled Lord Sycorax "Can't you see I'm wallowing in misery here? I don't need snot-nosed little runts invading my territory and annoying me even further!"

"P-P-Please, forgive me for d-disturbing you sir." stammered Sora, trying to keep her fear down so she wouldn't give Lord Sycorax the satisfaction of seeing her scared "I-I'm only here to-to talk with you a moment."

"Well I am not in the mood of talking to some silly little child who's invading my territory." snapped Lord Sycorax "Get out of here before I eat you alive."

"And risk getting a severe punishment from the warden outside?" said Sora "I don't think even you will be so foolish as to risk getting punished by the warden Sycorax."

"How do you know my name?" demanded Lord Sycorax "Have we met?"

"Nope, I am a super spy and we spies know everything." said Sora "Especially about you and your insidious region."

"Well that just gives me more of a reason to eat you then you repugnant little brat!" thundered Lord Sycorax, leaping onto his feet and bearing over the little fox in the utility belt, scaring the poor spy half to death "You know about my region and what they do so you

shouldn't be allowed to live!"

"Maybe not." said Sora calmly, relaxing herself "But you can't kill me here, you're gonna upset the warden dearly and I don't think you wanna try that, especially as you're out of your territory and very vulnerable here."

"I suppose not." muttered Lord Sycorax, sitting back down on the floor and scowling angrily "So what are you here to talk to me about then? How much you know about the region?"

"No." said Sora, sitting down on the floor with Sycorax "I wanna talk about you Lord Sycorax."

"Oh do ya?" growled Lord Sycorax "Then what do you want to know about me then?"

"I hope you don't mind my asking but, why do you have a prejudice against politics and democracy?" asked Sora "Everybody has a reason for their motivation and I'm interested in hearing your reason Sycorax."

Lord Sycorax was mostly surprised by this kind of question as he wasn't expecting somebody to ask him this. Well at least Sora wasn't asking him something in which the answer gave her too much information so he decided to answer her, at least she wouldn't be able to use this to her advantage or anything. The reptilian rebel sighed a little and then answered.

"My reason for my anarchism stems from bad experiences I've had with politics before." he said "You see, I never really viewed governments as any good. They put far too many limits on us, we're hardly free to do what we wish thanks to silly little laws and the royals and leaders of the world are just vain, arrogant jerks who preen to the lower people because of the fact they're rich and powerful and we have nothing. They're practically begging to be shot and I'll happily do so. Not to mention governments can be corrupted and end up doing worse then before. And how about some of the wars Mobius has had before peace finally befell the planet? They're mostly political manners and stuff like that would never happen if policy never existed. Politics are just a bad thing

and I don't see why nobody else can see that. Just imagine how much better Mobius would be if we didn't have laws and governments tying us down and acting all smug about it."

"Yeah, it would be a wonderful place indeed." muttered Sora sarcastically "A place full of crime and warfare and because there's no law and policy, nothing can be done about it. You do realize that Mobius will actually be worse off then it is before if you purge the world of policy Sycorax?"

"Wait what?" blurted Lord Sycorax.

"Think about it for a second there." said Sora "If there's no law or policy, people would commit crimes to their heart's content and wars would possibly break out as Mobians everywhere might fight for regions and what they want and the strong will prey upon the weak and the world will be a very savage place indeed. That's an apocalypse world if I ever saw one."

Lord Sycorax looked stunned to say the least. He hadn't thought on that about policy. He had very strong views against politics but he didn't consider how bad Mobius would be without policy. Maybe his goals were bad after all and maybe he was being a total idiot for it.

"You know what, I think you're right." said Lord Sycorax "I didn't consider that being the outcome of what happens when the region finally finishes purging the world of policy. I thought I was improving the world but I'm actually making it worse. I don't want the world to come to this at all."

Sora beamed happily. Her plan was working! Lord Sycorax was changing his wicked ways! But she shouldn't get her hopes up yet, she had no idea if Lord Sycorax was lying to her or not but his reaction to her testimony did seem to stun him so maybe he was telling the truth about coming to his senses.

"So Lord Sycorax, do you realize that your goal is doing more harm then good?" asked Sora.

"I do." said Lord Sycorax "I formed the region to better the world, not worsen it. So when I finally get out of this cell, I'll change the region's

image and no longer rebel against policy."

"I don't think that'll happen I'm afraid." said Sora sadly, her ears drooping down in fake sympathy "The region has deserted you."

"WHAT?" bellowed Lord Sycorax "The region…what?"

"I spied on your men last night and found out that Diesel, who has taken your place as leader right now, harbours no interest in rescuing you." said Sora "He's literally made it against the rules to try and rescue you. The region has no choice but to obey him as he's leader so they've decided to abandon you and leave you to rot in this cell."

This just made Lord Sycorax very angry indeed. His region dared to desert him? After all he did for these foolish reptiles? Well he'd show them a thing or two once he got out of this cell! He'd massacre everybody for this!

"Thos insolent lizards!" yelled Lord Sycorax "They dare to abandon me and leave me here? Well, I'll make sure everybody pays for this treachery! Thanks for that bit of information little one, I now know what my first objective will be once I'm released from this cell! I'll go back to the region, kick all their arses, and then disband it to teach them a lesson for their ungratefulness to me!"

"I'm happy to hear that Sycorax." said Sora brightly "I'm so glad you've come to your senses."

"I'm glad you've made me come to my senses." said Lord Sycorax "I was a fool for ever forming that stupid region in the first place. I do hope I get released from here so I can make those scaly morons pay for their treachery!"

Sora smiled like a child that's just gotten a piece of cake after her tea. Her statement on policy and lies about the region had worked! Lord Sycorax was willing to redeem himself and disband the region! The world of policy can now breathe a sigh of relief because the Region of Rebellious Reptiles was going to be no more once Lord Sycorax was released! Sora really had to hand it to herself; she was amazing for a twelve year old girl wasn't she? Well now her work

was done, she could leave Sycorax's cell and give everybody the good news. She stood up from the floor and walked over to the cell door. She knocked on it gently and Warden Maverick quickly opened it, letting Sora out of the cell. The door opened and Sora stepped out of the cell and the door closed behind her. Maverick looked at Sora and wondered if all had went well in there as she seemed really happy.

"So, how did it go?" asked Maverick.

"I've managed to sway his views believe it or not." said Sora "Lord Sycorax wants to redeem himself, disband the region and give up his life of anarchism."

"Really?" blurted Maverick "Wow, you're an amazing child do you know that? I didn't think Lord Sycorax could be redeemed."

"Well nothing's impossible you know." said Sora "I'm so glad everything worked out and I've gotten one of the biggest of bad to change his ways."

Unfortunately for Sora, that was all false. Lord Sycorax watched as Maverick and Sora walked away from his cell, a big fat smile appearing on his scaly lips. The moment they were gone, he began to gloat to himself (you surprised?).

"So what if my ambitions are doing more harm then good?" he said to himself "A world without policy is just what I want and regardless of the consequences, I'll get what I want. I'll enjoy it once policy is no more. As for my treacherous region, I'll smack them back into line sooner or later, especially that idiot Diesel for daring to forbid anyone from rescuing me! Oh how I fooled that stupid kid! All she's done is make me even more desperate to escape from here by informing me on what's going on in my region while I'm locked up in here!"

He cackled to himself maniacally, unable to believe how easily he'd managed to fool Sora into thinking he was willing to redeem himself. Everybody would lower their guard and then he could attempt to escape from the prison and get back into the region and proceed with his ambitions…

Meanwhile, a medium sized hover vehicle hovered in from over the sea and came onto dry land. This vehicle was like a hover craft only coloured like a reptile and given a scaly deco to enhance the reptilian feel of it. It was armed with two cannons on either side and it was piloted by (who else?) Romeo the Chameleon and Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard. They had a crate containing goodness knows what inside on the steel craft with them too. The craft had been given to them by Diesel as since they had "resigned" from the region, they weren't welcome to stay on the island and had to go somewhere else. Unknown to anybody, Romeo and Vladek had packed a steel crate and sneaked it onboard the craft as they left the island. The crate presumably had stuff they needed for their plan to break Lord Sycorax out of prison. Romeo drove the hover-craft onto the land and hovered a good distance before finally coming to a stop and settling down in some thickly grown vegetation where no one would see them. They were hiding in a jungle right now so no one would find them there. As the hover craft settled down, Romeo and Vladek climbed out of the hover craft and went around to the back to get the crate. Vladek grumbled as the heat of the jungle began to make him feel hot and bothered and his body began to rain with sweat. Wearing a full body suit in hot weather is never a good idea.

"Romeo, did we have to park here?" moaned Vladek, slapping a mosquito that was foolish enough to try and bite him "This heat's turning me into a waterworks factory!"

"Oh stop whining Vladek, we won't be here for long." said Romeo, grabbing on of the handles on the side of the crate "Besides, this hiding place is perfect. Nobody will find us here. The vegetation will hide us beautifully and we can carry our plans out as we wish with no silly buggers trying to interfere with us."

Vladek grabbed a handle on the other side of the crate and the two reptiles lifted the crate off the bed and onto the ground beneath their feet. As they settled the crate down, they both saw to opening it and setting up Operation: Breakout.

"I'm amazed we managed to sneak off with this with no suspicions whatsoever." said Romeo "Just proves how good we are."

"Yes, a lot better then that idiot Diesel!" growled Vladek, opening a latch on the crate "What I wouldn't give to throttle that jerk right now!"

"Taking power without authorization and then abusing it, highly irregular and abysmal in my opinion." said Romeo as he opened the last latch on the lid "That's why we took these supplies with us, so we can break Lord Sycorax out with them. Would be so much better if we could stick with the original plan but that brat who spied on us last night ruined everything and now everyone will see it coming so we've had to change the plan to throw everybody off."

"I think this new plan is better anyway." said Vladek, gripping the edges of the lid with his claws.

He and Romeo opened the crate and peered admiringly at what was inside. The crate contained a recon drone shaped like a giant dragonfly. It was completely silver in colour and had red optics, four sharp steel wings and six sharp steel legs that worked like a claw grabbing machine at an amusement arcade. This drone was essential to the plan and Romeo and Vladek were pleased to have smuggled this past the region. Recon drones were valuable equipment to the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and this one was going to be valuable to Romeo and Vladek definitely. Romeo and Vladek put the drone on the hover-craft bed as they didn't want it to get dirty from the sludgy ground beneath their feet and they rummaged some more through the crate. They had also packed several detonators with them and a signal scrambling device so that the prison wouldn't be able to all for back-up and the satellites wouldn't be able to pick up what was going on in the prison. The prison wouldn't be able to contact anybody for help and any spy corporation wouldn't be able to pick them up either once this was set up. The final thing they got out of the crate was a visual contact box that was a bit like a television only you saw what the drone was seeing, a remote control for the drone and a remote for the detonators. Now they'd unpacked everything, they began to set up the plan. Romeo opened the drone's back and stuffed all the detonators into the dragonfly shaped robot. Now they were all placed inside, Romeo shut the latch and Vladek set up the visual contact box.

"This really is a brilliant idea." said Vladek "Using this drone to set up the charges for us and then we blow the place once it's set them all up. Then after the prison's destroyed, we get Lord Sycorax into the craft and back to the island."

"The plan is foolproof." said Romeo "Nobody will see this coming and no one will be able to stop it. Everybody will assume we're going to try the first plan thanks to that meddling kid who spied on us telling everybody it. And right now, there's no reason they shouldn't keep right on thinking that."

"Yeah, no reason at all." said Vladek with a vicious toothy grin that could make even the Creature from the Black Lagoon retreat back into its home in fear "And when this plan carries out and Lord Sycorax escapes, they'll be furious with that kid and accuse her of deception! And we will be far out of sight when they've finished chastising her! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lord Sycorax will promote us for this." said Romeo "Now let's get started."

He switched the remote control on and extended the antenna on it. Vladek switched the drone on and the dragonfly-shaped robot kicked into life. Its optics flashed and its wings began twitching. Romeo pulled back on one of the joysticks and the recon drone lifted off the bed slightly. It hovered over the signal scrambling device and then grabbed it with its legs. Romeo pulled back on the joysticks and the drone took to the skies, making an ominous whirring sound as it did so. The drone flew off and Romeo steered it for Nekronopolis' MPD station. Unfortunately for the prison, Romeo knew where it was so the drone will reach there in no time.

"Do you think the remote's signal has enough range for the drone?" asked Vladek.

This drone could go halfway around Mobius before it runs out of range." said Romeo "The drone will get to Nekronopolis in no time and we can begin the breakout."

The two reptiles smiled evilly at each other as they began to picture the carnage that was about to ensue once the drone set up the

detonators and they blew them up, taking the prison down and freeing their leader at long last...

A couple of hours later, the recon drone finally arrived at Nekronopolis. Its ominous whirring sound was unheard to anybody as Nekronopolis was already busy with noise as it is. It was a fairly busy city despite not being a large one so the recon drone could easily fly over the city without anyone hearing it and it was flying high above the ground so no one would see it. The recon drone continued flying above the city with its beady optics open for the MPD station. Romeo and Vladek had a visual back in the jungle thanks to the visual contact box so they could see where it was going and what it was seeing. The recon drone flew and flew until it finally spotted what it was looking for, the Nekronopolis MPD station. How Romeo knew this was because through the drone's vision, he could see what looked like an exercise yard and there were people dressed in orange jumpsuits, the traditional attire of inmates. Romeo steered the drone towards the prison and the dragonfly shaped machine sailed towards it, whirring even more ominously. Unfortunately, the prison didn't have much noise going on so the drone's whirring was bound to be heard by at least somebody. Fortunately, it was flying to high up for the noise to be heard so nobody would hear it. Down on the ground, the drone could see Lord Sycorax talking to somebody. Vladek zoomed in the drone's vision to get a better look. It was definitely Lord Sycorax and he appeared to be talking to a reptilian creature. This reptile was a Mobian goanna who was broad and muscular with a deep raspy voice and a bad eye. Lord Sycorax was familiar with him. That was because he was a member of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles but he got caught and arrested and Lord Sycorax didn't have the time to try and rescue him so he left him. He hadn't been happy about this but he understood how busy a region leader can get so he didn't lose his wick with him for not trying to rescue him. The drone flew down towards the prison and it settled down onto the roof of the prison, listening in on Sycorax's conversation with the goanna. Romeo and Vladek recognized the goanna too and they were well surprised.

"Good gracious me, it's Gorton!" cried Vladek

"It's good old Gorton!" cried Romeo "I wonder how he's doing then?"

They stopped talking and listened to Lord Sycorax's conversation. Not only could they see what the drone was seeing, they could also hear what the drone was hearing, not that it was really "hearing" this but you get the idea.

"So Gorton, how's things been for ya lad?" asked Sycorax.

"Downright horrible master I tells ya." grumbled Gorton, picking a rock up and crushing it with his bare claws "Dose cops don't gives ya a break and those inmates beats me up I tells ya. Dey tinks that I'm just some kind of punk who's waiting to be smacked around I tells ya. Well dey have another tink coming now my master's back haven't they?"

"You got that right Gorton." said Sycorax with a big toothy grin on his face, a traditional trademark of crocodiles everywhere "Anyone messing with a member of my region answers to me! Speaking of which, I do apologize greatly for not taking the time to try and rescue you. I've just had too much time on my hands to bother about you. But don't worry, now I'm here, I haven't got any time on my hands so now I can get you out of here."

"You planning a breakout my lord?" asked Gorton gruffly.

"I am." said Lord Sycorax "Not really sure how I'm gonna do it but I will, for I am the great Lord Sycorax, leader of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and best crocodile out there! No prison wall is going to keep me detained!"

"I likes that boss." said Gorton with an evil chuckle on his face "I likes that I tells ya. When you breaks outta here, you'll be taking me withs ya won't ya?"

"I will indeed Gorton." said Sycorax "You're my best sniper and I'll need you for my next big push, although it'll have to wait until we get outta here first and we need to get outta here now before the Annual Acorn Awards come out."

"De Annual Acorn Awards boss?" questioned Gorton.

"Yes my gormless goanna, the Annual Acorn Awards." purred Lord Sycorax "You know, the day the Acorn Family give out Acorn Awards to the best citizens of Mobotropolis! That'll be the perfect time to destroy Castle Acorn and wipe it off the map of policy won't it?"

"It will boss!" Gorton growled delightedly "Dose silly Acorns will not expect us to attack them on an awards ceremony will dey?"

"Not at all." said Lord Sycorax with a gloating grin on his face "And they shouldn't expect those Royal Fighters or my wayward son Vector to stop me because they won't. Not even they will be a match for the region once I get back into power!"

The two reptiles cackled to each other maniacally as they pictured a destroyed Castle Acorn in their foul little minds. As for Romeo and Vladek, they had heard everything and they were even more pleased with themselves then before.

"Lord Sycorax plans to attack Castle Acorn on the day of the Annual Acorn Awards?" mused Romeo.

"Good thing we're breaking him out NOW isn't it?" asked Vladek "It's only four days away now! I must say, I wasn't expecting Lord Sycorax to attack the castle on an awards ceremony. Oh well, it makes Castle Acorn's demise more enjoyable."

"Well we'd best get on with it then." said Romeo, pushing on the controls and making the drone raise off the rooftop.

The recon drone rose off the rooftop and hovered over to the centre of the rooftop. It put down the signal scrambler and attached it to the roof. Then, it rotated the top of the device to one side, red lights flashing as it did so, and it pressed a button on the base of the device with its leg. The device was on and nobody would be able to make a phone call or pick the station up on radar or satellite unless it was turned off. Now that particular bit was done, the drone flew off to do its other duty. Set up the detonators and blow the place sky high but not too much or it would destroy the signal scrambling

device. Since Lord Sycorax was out in the yard though, that made things even easier for Romeo and Vladek to break him out. All they had to do really was just blow the walls down and that was it. The drone flew down from the roof top and hid behind the prison itself. The drone then proceeded to attach itself to the wall and as it did so, a detonator came out of its body and attached itself neatly to the wall. The detonator was small, round and had a red light on it. It would not go off until Romeo and Vladek set them off with the remote they had for the bombs. The drone flew off two paces and then attached itself to the wall again, attaching another detonator to the wall. It did this six more times, leaving eight detonators on the back of the prison in total. The dragonfly bot then proceeded to hover down low to the ground and fly around behind the yard walls. The walls were tall and made of solid steel with no way of seeing through them so nobody would see the drone doing its dirty work. The drone attached itself to one section of the wall and then planted a detonator on it. It flew all away around the exercise yard walls, planting detonators on the walls all the way. The drone kept planting detonators until it ran out and then Romeo decided it was time for the drone to return before someone spotted it so he turned the drone around and made it fly away from Nekronopolis and back towards the jungle he and Vladek were hiding in. The drone had planted eight detonators on the back of the prison and twenty detonators all around the prison walls so twenty eight detonators had been placed and were all waiting to go off. Another couple of hours later, the drone arrived back at the jungle where Romeo and Vladek were hiding and Romeo steered it down onto the hovercraft's bed. The two reptiles packed the drone and its remote back into the crate so it could be used for next time. They switched off the visual contact box and packed that away too.

"The bombs are set up Romeo." said Vladek "Now let's set them off and get Lord Sycorax outta here."

Romeo obeyed and he pressed a button on the remote for the bombs. If the bombs went off then a red light would blink on the remote. But the light wasn't blinking, that meant the bombs weren't going off. Romeo pressed the button furiously but the light still didn't blink. That could only mean one thing.

"Blast it, the bombs are out of range!" cursed Romeo "We're going to have to go over to the prison ourselves and set them off!"

"That'll be better anyway." said Vladek "That way we'll be able to just pick up Lord Sycorax in the hover craft and flee straight away."

With that said, Romeo and Vladek quickly scrambled into the hovercraft and they set off for Nekronopolis. Lord Sycorax was as good as free they arrived at the prison. The prison would have no idea what hit it once the bombs went off…

It took longer to get from the jungle to Nekronopolis on land then it did in the air so Romeo and Vladek took quite a while to get to the prison in their hovercraft. It took them a total of four hours (this whole plan's taken them eight hours in total to unleash! Two hours to fly the drone there, two hours to fly it back and now four hours just to get to Nekronopolis in a hovercraft to set them off! That's total and complete dedication to a leader if I ever saw one!) to reach the MPD station at last. However, their arrival did not go without detection of course for the prison had a lookout in one of the lookout towers stationed on the roof of the prison itself and through a pair of binoculars, the lookout spotted the oncoming hovercraft. Were these the two reptiles hoping to break Lord Sycorax out? The lookout peered closer to their vehicle. He could see Romeo and Vladek in the driver's and passenger's seat respectively. Maverick had told him to lookout for a red chameleon and a red frill-necked lizard in traditional region armour. These two fit the bill like a glove. Romeo was a red chameleon and Vladek was a red frill-necked lizard and they both wore traditional region armour. They were the two reptiles hoping to break Lord Sycorax out of the prison. Well now he'd seen them, he could alert everybody to them. He ran down from the tower and into the prison itself. He ran out of the prison and over to Warden Maverick.

"Sir, the red chameleon and red frill-necked lizard are coming towards us!" he reported "Their breakout attempt is commencing!"

"Thank you for that my good man." said Maverick "Now it's time to get rid of them. We know their plan thanks to Sora so we will not fall

for it."

With that said, Maverick barked at his fellow officers, who were on patrol duty right now.

"Attention officers! The two reptiles that Sora told us were attempting to break Lord Sycorax out are coming to commence their dastardly plot! Everyone over the walls with your guns at the ready! The moment they claim to surrender, shoot them quick!"

"Yes sir!" yelled all the officers.

With that said, the police officers all ran out of the yard and into the prison. They exited the prison through the entrance and ran all the way around to the end wall of the exercise yard where they all formed a wall standing guard in front of the prison wall. They all clocked their pistols and they pointed them at the oncoming hovercraft. As for Lord Sycorax and Gorton, they were well surprised to hear about a rescue mission, especially Sycorax as Sora had told him the region had deserted him.

"Two reptiles are coming to break me out?" mused Lord Sycorax "But…that vixen kid told me the region had deserted me! Why would two reptiles be attempting to break me out if they've deserted me?"

"I dunno boss but I tinks dat kid you were talkin' too might have been lyin' to ya I tells ya." said Gorton "Because dese two reptiles are comin' to break you out. Dat doesn't suggest the region's deserted ya to me."

Lord Sycorax began to fume angrily as something in his mind went click.

"That kid must have been lying to me all the while about the region deserting me in an attempt to get me to change myself and disband it!" he growled "Well, I'd love to rip that kid's heart out should I ever see her again! How dare she try to make me disband my region! Well even if it was true, she would have failed anyway because I will not disband my glorious region! Instead, I'll use a method I have that'll assure me complete and total control over them and complete and total loyalty to me from those reptiles!"

"I likes da sound of dat sir." said Gorton evilly."

"Unfortunately, the kid's apparently told the warden and his officers about those two reptile's escape plan so it's going to fail miserably." said Sycorax grimly "Now I've REALLY got to kill that kid when I get outta here! She's botching up an attempt to break me out!"

Little did Sycorax know is the two reptiles already KNEW that Sora had bailed them out so they were using an entirely different plan altogether. On the other side of the prison walls, Romeo and Vladek stopped their hovercraft and confronted the row of police officers, waiting to shoot them. The two stepped out of the hovercraft and they raised their arms up pretending to surrender. Maverick stood forward and confronted the two reptiles. Although his first idea was to just shoot them on the spot, he wanted to see if he could get them to surrender for real first.

"You two, we know what you're planning!" barked Maverick "You're plotting to break Lord Sycorax out of here and you're going to accomplish that by tricking us into arresting you and then infiltrating the place from the inside out! Your plan has failed because we know what you're plotting! Now stand down and surrender yourselves for real or we WILL kill you both!"

"Oh sir, there's no need to be so hasty." said Vladek smoothly "We knew you would know our plan as we found out we were spied on and had a feeling that spy would tattle on us."

"Which is why we've changed our plan instead!" yelled Romeo, dramatically whipping out the remote for the detonators and pressing the button quickly.

The detonators immediately lit up and then exploded in a train of explosions that came from the back of the prison and went all across the walls. All twenty three detonators went off and destroyed the walls and the back end of the prison. Lord Sycorax couldn't believe his eyes when he saw all the bombs going off around the prison. The reptiles had a backup plan and it was working! As for the poor officers that were standing in front of the wall, they were blown away by the detonators and killed instantly by the explosions and flying shrapnel and debris. Maverick was away from the wall so he was

only knocked over by the force of the explosion. The explosion was so incredible and so loud that anyone in the city of Nekronopolis nearby could hear it. And one of them happened to be Sora. Instead of going back home, Sora decided to look around Nekronopolis and see what the city was like and she heard the explosion going off at the prison. She turned her head around and saw a thick cloud of smoke coming from the prison. Her heart stopped and her ears drooped back in despair.

"No…No…No, No, No, No, NO!" she cried, sprinting off dead quick and heading off to the prison "Oh god, please no! Don't let it be what I think it is!"

She ran across the streets of Nekronopolis and straight to the prison. She skidded to a halt, sending dust and grit flying everywhere as she did so and she surveyed the horrifying scene before her. The back end of the prison had been blown down, leaving a massive hole behind the prison and the walls enclosing the exercise yard had been completely destroyed by the powerful detonators. The officers that tried to stop Romeo and Vladek were all dead and their blood stained the ground they lay on. Maverick was still alive at least and he respectfully retreated. He ran for his life before anyone could stop him. All the inmates on the yard ran for their lives, pleased to see that the walls had been blown down. Nothing could stop them now. Sora stomped the ground in fury and she punched herself on the forehead in an exasperated manner.

"You idiot!" she scolded herself "You stupid, stupid, stupid idiot! Of course Romeo and Vladek were gonna change tactics! They know I know their plan so of course they were gonna change it! How did I not know this was going to happen? Oh Sora you dumbass! You've screwed up big time you have! The M.S.I.U. will never forgive me for this!"

Back on the open yard, Lord Sycorax and Gorton watched the other inmates run for their lives and they smiled at this turn of events. They then proceeded to run for it too. After all, this was their big opportunity and they had to take it and fast. Romeo and Vladek climbed into the hovercraft and they hovered over to the fleeing reptiles. Sora decided she was going to try and stop them so she ran over to the hovercraft. Lord Sycorax's face brightened at the

mere sight of Romeo and Vladek and he hurriedly climbed into the hovercraft. Gorton climbed on to.

"Romeo! Vladek! My two loyal henchmen!" cackled Lord Sycorax "I hadn't anticipated this to happen! I thought your plan was going to go kaput since the cops already knew it!"

"We know." said Romeo "We caught a spy spying on us and she escaped. So I decided to change it. We used a recon drone to set up the charges around the prison and we've set up a signal scrambler so the prison can't call for help and no one can pick it up on satellite."

"Well you two, you have been absolutely brilliant!" praised Lord Sycorax "I'm gonna promote you two to the second highest rank in the Region of Rebellious Reptiles! You're now joint second in commands and next in line to the throne of leadership!"

Romeo and Vladek were so overwhelmed with joy they had no idea what to do about it over then gawp about it. They were well amazed by this.

"Thank you sir!" spluttered Vladek "This is an honour! An absolute honour this is!"

"You're welcome." said Sycorax "So tell me, what's going on back at the region?"

"Well Diesel's being a complete and utter imbecile and he's forbidden anyone to try and rescue you so he can stay leader." reported Romeo.

"Me and Romeo feigned resigning the region in order to carry this mission out unnoticed to him." said Vladek "Once you get back, you can deal with him and push him back into place."

"Oh I will!" growled Sycorax "Abusing power like this and trying to keep me locked up! The indignity! I'll demote him to the lowest rank in the region and Gorton can take his place as third in command as you two are both second in command!"

"I can't wait to see the look on Diesel's face when he sees ya back in

de region boss." crooned Gorton "I can't wait indeed!"

Before the hovercraft could make its quick getaway however, Sora caught up to them and she stopped just at the side of the craft. The reptiles all glared at her with their cold reptilian eyes.

"Lord Sycorax wait!" cried Sora "Why are you going with them? I thought you were gonna change your wicked ways and abandon your life of anarchism and disband the region! Why are you willingly going back to the very region that's deserted you?"

Romeo, Vladek and Gorton all stared at Lord Sycorax as if he'd just turned into a turnip. Lord Sycorax ignored them and he smiled wickedly at Sora. Sora began to feel nervous. This was not a good sign at all.

"I lied!" crowed Lord Sycorax "I don't care if a world without policy is going to be worse then a world with policy! I want a world without policy and a world without policy is what I'll get! Policy is bad and it must be destroyed!"

Sora looked like someone had just ripped her heart out of her chest. She was so horrified that she almost fell down in shock. Her attempts to sway Lord Sycorax had all been in vain? She'd did all this for nothing? What a waste of valuable time that was then!

"You…you…you…lied to me?" shrieked Sora "You…you sick, twisted, anarchistic swamp dweller! How…How could you do this to me you heartless monster?"

"Because I'm the leader of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles that's why!" gloated Lord Sycorax "Anyway, I'm not pleased to hear you squealed on everybody and tried to ruin Romeo and Vladek's attempt to break me out of prison so I'm going to have to kill you! Gorton, kill that wretched little spy!"

"With pleasure boss!" purred Gorton, crackling his knuckles.

Gorton hated children and he loved killing them as in his view, watching them die was more fun then watching an adult die so he was going to enjoy this. Gorton leaped out of the hovercraft and

advanced on Sora menacingly with his claws bare. Sora gulped and began to back away ever so slowly. Then Gorton attempted to grab Sora. He lunged for her and tried to grab her throat but Sora dodged him and ran for her life.

"You'll pay dearly for this Lord Sycorax!" screamed Sora "I swear on the soul of my dead foster father, you will pay for this!"

"Oh shut up and die already." muttered Lord Sycorax "Gorton, get her!"

Gorton picked himself and ran after Sora at a frighteningly fast pace. Gorton was a fast goanna after all and a puny little vixen was not going to escape him so easily. Sora ran as fast as she could possibly go but Gorton caught up to her easily. He lunged at Sora but Sora ducked, causing him to miss and crash into the ground instead. Sora kicked him sharply in the head, making sure the heel part of her heeled shoes hit him in particular and then ran off again around the back of the prison. Gorton picked himself up and chased after her. Sora stopped dead in her tracks and whipped off her utility belt her spray bottle. Gorton ran around the back of the prison to catch Sora and he was just about to grab her until Sora sprayed the spray directly into his eyes. Gorton screamed in agony as his eyes began to throb and sting like crazy and he rubbed them furiously. Sora decided to take him out while he was blinded. She kicked Gorton sharply in the stomach and then kicked him in the head. Gorton staggered backwards into the hole in the wall the detonators blew and he fell onto his back. Unfortunately for him, there was a brick on the ground just where he was going to land so the back of his head hit the brick and he was knocked out after that. The goanna lay on the ground, dazed and confused and unconscious. Sora saw this as an opportunity to get her own back on Lord Sycorax so she rolled up her glove, revealing a wrist mounted device she had hidden there. It was a holographic disguise emitter. It could disguise you as anything you wanted to and since your disguise was holographic, you wouldn't have to worry about being too small or too tall. It also felt solid when you wore it so no one would suspect anything about you being in disguise. Sora scanned Gorton with it and then turned the dials around. The device emitted a disguise around her. She now looked exactly like Gorton and the holo-

disguise emitter was hidden by the sleeve of his prison outfit. Not only did Sora look like Gorton, she would also sound like him as it disguised voices too. Now Sora had her disguise on, she ran out from behind the prison and back towards the hovercraft where Lord Sycorax, Romeo and Vladek were waiting for him. Sora hopped onto the hovercraft and Lord Sycorax awaited for him to speak.

"Well? Is she dead?" asked Sycorax "Is the spy dead?"

"Yes sir." said Sora in Gorton's voice "I killed dat stupid little spy I did. She's as dead as a dingbat I tells ya."

Luckily for her, the scan performed on Gorton had told her his manner of speech and Sora had mastered many different manners of speech so this one was easy for her. Lord Sycorax grinned evilly, pleased to hear this from his fellow "reptile rebel".

"Excellent work Gorton!" cried Lord Sycorax "I feel like such a twonk for not breaking you out sooner! Well my friends, let us return to the Region of Rebellious Reptiles!"

With that said, Romeo stepped on the pedal and the hovercraft soared off into the distance away from Nekronopolis and onto the oceans so they could enter the secret island and the base of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles. Sora sat by in silence and waited for the return to the region base. She'd already spied on the Region of Rebellious Reptiles last night and now she was going to have to spy on them again and hopefully, get Lord Sycorax back in prison. Lord Sycorax may have escaped but he wasn't going to stay free now she was in disguise and in their ranks. Sora now made it her number one priority to bring Lord Sycorax back to jail and she would not rest until she succeeded…

Footnotes:

***Remember Story 89 where Super Scourge destroyed the MPD station of Empire City?**

Well...this sucks. Lord Sycorax has escaped! But for how long? Will Sora stop him now she's in disguise and going with them secretly? Or will the insidious region leader be too much for her? Reviews are welcome.

Stratagem of the Reptiles 3

Arc 11: Stratagem of the Reptiles

Takes place five months after Story 93 and a month before Story 94

Part 3: Challenge for Leadership

A good long while after the breakout began (to be more precise, it's dusk now), Lord Sycorax, Romeo, Vladek and "Gorton" (Psst! It's really Sora Sumdac in disguise! But don't tell Lord Sycorax that!) all arrived at the lonely little island the Region of Rebellious Reptile's base was located on. Lord Sycorax breathed a whiff of fresh air as the hovercraft pulled into the base and the reptiles climbed out of it.

"Aaaah, I love the smell of rebellious reptiles." he said to himself "I sure have missed the glorious scent of this place."

"Me and Romeo have missed having a **competent** leader." said Vladek "We're so looking forward to seeing what plans you have for Diesel."

"Oh I have one thing planned for that traitor." growled Lord Sycorax "And I won't tell you what it is until Diesel's battered and beaten and lying on the floor in excruciating pain."

"Why?" asked Romeo "Is it one of those surprise punishments you sometimes have when someone crosses the line with you?"

"It certainly is." said Lord Sycorax with a sadistic grin on his face "Before we do anything, Gorton and I need to ditch our prison fatigues. I can't present myself to the region looking like this."

"We'll sneak you into the changing rooms through the roof." said Vladek "We don't want Diesel to see you until you're ready."

With that said, the reptiles all climbed up the side of the building and onto the roof. As they did this, the disguised Sora began to wonder

why she didn't think of getting into the base this way when she spied on the region last night. Regardless, now she had that in mind, she could break into the base this way should she ever need to spy on them again. Romeo led the reptiles over to a trap door on the roof and he opened it. The reptiles all slid through the door and into the base. The reptiles all found themselves in a corridor that was full of doors but they didn't look very hi-tech or modern, they just looked like ordinary doors. These doors led to the changing rooms, the very rooms were the Region's Reptiles changed outfits should they need to. Lord Sycorax quickly found his changing room at the end of the corridor. It was a door marked with the words "Keep out! This room belongs to Lord Sycorax!" and it was always locked, unless he was in it of course. It had a keypad that unlocked the door once he pressed his fingers against the screen. Lord Sycorax touched the pad with his finger and the door unlocked itself. Lord Sycorax opened the door and let himself in. He shut the door behind him. Nobody would be able to get in and spy on him because the door locked once he went in and the only way to open it from the inside was turn the door handle. As for Sora, she looked for a changing room marked with Gorton's name as all the doors were marked with the reptile rebel's names. She found a door marked with the words "Gorton the Goanna. No one but him may enter this room". The Region had strict rules after all, even when it came to privacy. Sora twisted the doorknob and opened the door. She let herself in and shut the door behind her. Now no one could see her, Sora could make some alterations to her disguise. She spotted a traditional reptile rebel armour suit hanging on a peg on the wall. She rolled up her "sleeve" and twisted something on her holo-disguise emitter. The device scanned the blue suit of armour and Sora twisted something else on the holo-disguise emitter. The device changed her appearance from Gorton in prison fatigues to Gorton in Reptile Rebel armour. Much like the prison fatigues, the armour felt solid and real and no one would suspect that Gorton was really a disguised Sora Sumdac. Sora looked at herself in a mirror and she admired herself all over.

"Hmm. I look good in armour." she said in her normal voice as she felt the chest plate and arm pieces "Although I really don't look good as an ugly old lizard. I hope I never have to wear such a hideous disguise again."

She decided that she'd had enough looking at herself and she altered the disguise emitter a little so she now had Gorton's voice again.

"I really hate dis horrible growly voice too." she muttered in Gorton's voice "And dis accent makes me sound like a right idiot too! Oh well, a spy has to fit in the best he/she can. And the best I can fit in is appearance and voice too."

Sora adjusted her shoulder pads and she left the changing room. Romeo and Vladek were waiting for him and their faces brightened at the sight of Gorton back in Reptile Rebel armour.

"I can't begin to tell you how good it is to have you back Gorton." said Romeo "You really have been missed among many comrades here."

"And I can't begin to tell ya how much I've missed dis region." said Sora "Prison life ain't half boring I tells ya. Nothing but long hard work and little rest. No fun whatsoever. It's a good ting our lord got relocated to Nekronopolis otherwise there'd be no reason to break me outta that joint."

"I do hope you have no hard feelings against us for leaving you for so long Gorton." said Vladek "Sycorax tried to find time to break you out after you were unfortunately arrested during the Siege of Spagonia ten months ago but he was too busy to bother about you. Being leader does take a heavy toll on your spare time after all."

"I don't worry, I forgives ya." said Sora, trying not to make Gorton sound off "I'm still narked it took you dis long to rescue me but hey, dat's region life for ya, it's hard to get spare time."

"You got that right." said Romeo.

Their conversation was interrupted as Lord Sycorax's changing room door opened up and out stepped Lord Sycorax. He was no longer in his prison fatigues. He was back in his uniquely shaped helmet with visor and snout cover, armour piece on his back that had two jets that stood up behind his head, shoulder pads and had two structures that sat in front of his shoulder, strength enhancing

arm gauntlets on the lower parts of his arms, red gloves, long red shoes with black soles and metal pieces on them with spikes pointing backwards once again. Lord Sycorax grinned evilly as he admired himself all over (yes, he still hasn't gotten out of that habit!). It filled him with pride to be back in his trademark armour at last.

"Boy have I missed this suit of armour!" cackled Lord Sycorax as he flexed his muscles "I fell glorious all over again now I'm back in it!"

"You look as great as you always did." said Romeo "Welcome back to the region Lord Sycorax."

"Thank you my new second in commands." said Sycorax with a grateful smile to Romeo and Vladek "Now, before we make our plans to wipe Castle Acorn off the map, I've got a traitor to deal with and some soldiers to push back in line. Follow me boys, you're going to enjoy this smack down I have planned for Diesel."

With that said, Lord Sycorax stormed down the corridor with Romeo, Vladek and Sora following him. The meeting between Lord Sycorax and Diesel was not going to be a pleasant sight for anybody once they got going at each other. Romeo and Vladek were looking forward to it whereas Sora had a feeling she wasn't going to enjoy it much…

Meanwhile in Mobotropolis, the beautiful Queen Sally Acorn was in her dressing room wondering on what she should wear for the Annual Acorn Awards in four days time. She had many dresses to choose from and it was difficult to single out which dress was the perfect one to wear. They all looked great and if Sally could, she'd wear them all but she could only wear one dress so she had to pick. At least she was deciding her costume fours days in advance otherwise she'd be in a right royal pickle now. Her dress wasn't the only concern though. Her hairstyle was something to think about too. She had no idea if she should leave her hair as it is or style it in a fancy fashion to look even nicer. That's girls for you, they're walking wardrobes. They have more then they can take clothes wise and yet they can never decide what to wear (they make up their minds in the end but you see my point boys! Hee, hee, hee!). Sally picked up an

orange dress that was off the shoulder and trimmed in gold. She also picked up a purple dress with no sleeves, had shoulder straps, was trimmed with gold at the hem and had an accompanying sash that was also trimmed in gold. She stared hopelessly at the two dresses. Which one would be the better dress for an award's ceremony?

"Oooh, they're both so good!" moaned Sally "Which one should I wear? Off the shoulder? Sleeveless? Purple? Orange? Why did I have to have so many dresses? My mother was no better though, she was just as nervy about fashion like I am. I guess I got my fashion disorder from her. Oh well, I'll make up my mind eventually. As for my hair, I really dread having to decide about that when I'm finished with my clothes! Ha, ha, ha!"

Her laughter was interrupted by a polite knock at the door. Sally put her dresses down on the bed and answered.

"Come in." she said politely.

The door opened and in walked Sally's beautiful lady-in-waiting Nicole the Lynx. The lynx had been deciding on her costume for the awards ceremony in four days time but something had bugged her so she decided to come to Sally and tell her something.

"Hello Nicole." said Sally brightly "Have you made up your mind on what you want to wear at the Acorn Awards?"

"No yet Sally." said Nicole "I'm not here about that though. I have some strange news to give you. I keep trying to call Nekronopolis to see if they've encountered the two reptiles that Sora the Spy claims is attempting to break Lord Sycorax out but I can't get a hold of them. The phone just gives me static fuzzing when I try to contact them."

Sally put a finger to her lips and thought on this matter.

"Hmm, that is odd." she said "You can't contact Nekronopolis. Something smells fishy around here and I'm going to find out what it is. I'll send Sonic and Tails over to investigate Nekronopolis to see if they can find out why you can't contact them. I do hope something

bad hasn't happened or I'll begin to feel very nervous about this."

"Should I go and send them?" asked Nicole.

"No, I can do it myself thanks." said Sally "You keep on deciding your outfit Nicole."

Sally left her dressing room and headed off out of Castle Acorn and over to Royal HQ, which was next door to the castle, to give Sonic and Tails a task to do. She could easily trust those two to investigate Nekronopolis and see if they could find out what was happening over there. Sally stood by the door of Royal HQ and knocked on it politely.

"Hello? Is anybody home?" asked Sally "It's me, Queen Sally Acorn. I have a task for Sonic and Tails."

"Come in your majesty." came the voice of Geoffrey St. John the Skunk from inside the building.

Geoffrey was in the lab and he spoke to Sally through the mike on the control pad. Sally let herself into the building and she headed off to the rest room, the one room in Royal HQ she usually expected Sonic and Tails to be hanging out in. She was right to think that because the rest room was exactly where Sonic and Tails were right now along with everybody else on the team: Wilson the Dog, Mandy Mouse, Amy Rose, Cream the Rabbit (who had been happily getting back together with her long lost father Porthos), Cosmo the Seedrian, Bunnie Rabbot and Ruben the Water Panther. Five months had passed since the defeat of Perfect Chaos* and they had been enjoying the peace since then. The moment Sally walked into the room, everybody sat up and stared at her. Just getting visited by a royal was enough to catch their attention. Sonic bowed down before Sally respectfully.

"Hi Queenie." said Sonic "What brings you to our humble hidey hole then?"

"Hello everybody." said Sally "I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

"You, interrupting anything? Phsst! Of course not!" laughed Sonic.

"Ever since we defeated Chaos, things have been pretty quiet." said Amy "All we're doing really is hanging out and having some fun with each other."

"So pretty much, we're not doing anything." said Mandy "So, what brings you to Royal HQ then?"

"Well, Nicole's been trying to contact Nekronopolis but she can't get through to the city." explained Sally "I want to send the best and brightest over there to see what's going on over there."

"If I'm to guess by best and brightest, you mean me and Tails." said Sonic "Although if there's anything going on at Nekronopolis, wouldn't the Northern Royal Fighters be the ones on the case?"

"Maybe they are but since we can't reach them, we don't know for sure." said Sally "So Sonic, can you and Tails please do this task for me?"

"I'm willing to go your majesty." said Tails "See if we can find out what's going on over there."

"I'll take this task too." said Sonic "Hopefully, this'll be leading up to something exciting. I'll catch ya later guys." he called over to his friends.

"See ya'll later sugah-hog." said Bunnie "We'll wait patiently for you and Tails to return."

"Due to how fast I am, I doubt anybody will be waiting for long." joked Sonic "Let's go Tails, Nekronopolis awaits us."

With that said, Sonic rushed out of Royal HQ, making sure he didn't barge past Sally accidentally, with Tails flying behind him. The two heroes left the base behind and they headed off to Nekronopolis to see if they could find out why Nicole couldn't contact the city and see if there was anything suspicious going on over at the northern city…

Back at the region base, Diesel the Komodo Dragon, reptile brute

and replacement leader for Lord Sycorax all the while he had been incarcerated, was discussing with the reptile rebels of the region about some plans he had. Coincidentally, he and Lord Sycorax seemed to have the same idea, destroy Castle Acorn on the day of the Annual Acorn Awards so this throw-down was going to be even more brutal once the two got going. The Region all listened to Diesel as explained the ideas he had for the region's next attack.

"Attention Reptile Rebels." boomed Diesel "I've got a plan for the Region of Rebellious Reptile's next big push."

"I should bloomin' well hope you do!" snapped a very cheeky gecko in Reptile Rebel armour "We've been bored out of our scaly skins since the failure to destroy Castle Acorn the first time!**"

"I know." said Diesel "So you'll be pleased to know your boredom will be over as I've got a plan that'll ensure the destruction of Castle Acorn."

"What plan might that be then?" asked a yellow salamander in Reptile Rebel armour.

"Does anybody in this room know when the Annual Acorn Awards are?" asked Diesel.

"Four days time." answered an alligator who looked almost as brutish as Diesel himself.

"Correct." said Diesel "No better time to attack a political landmark then on an important day. So we're gonna attack Castle Acorn on the day of the Annual Acorn Awards."

"So what's the plan then?" asked a green iguana in Reptile Rebel armour.

"The plan is, we will sneak over to the Castle and hide behind whatever we can hide behind." explained Diesel "Then, when Sally prepares to give the awards, we cut loose and blast everybody in sight. Then a special team armed with bazookas will destroy the castle with them once we've killed everybody."

The Reptile Rebels all murmured amongst each other after hearing

that plan. It didn't seem like a very good plan to them (Which, in all honesty, it isn't.), it seemed a little foolish to them and they had to speak up before Diesel got carried away with himself.

"That doesn't seem like a good plan to me." said the yellow salamander "Castle Acorn hasn't got many hiding places and just leaping out and attacking is never the bets move. Those Royal Fighters are bound to be at the ceremony so they'll get in the way and if we just leap out and shoot everybody in sight, they'll just launch an assault and beat us back. Remember what happened when we fought the Royal Fighters the first time we met Castle Acorn?"

Diesel glared at the salamander and he drew out a silver short-barrelled pistol from a holster on his belt. He pointed it at the salamander and shot him dead with a laser blast from the pistol. The salamander collapsed off his chair and onto the floor, much to the horror of the reptiles in the room. Diesel put the pistol back in his belt holster but he kept his death glare on.

"Anyone else care to stupidly disagree with me?" he snarled angrily.

Now they knew Diesel had a pistol and would shoot anyone who said no to him, the reptiles remained silence and kept their opinions to themselves. Diesel was a very stubborn reptile after all and anyone who thought he was wrong or dared to say no to him would get it. Diesel grinned evilly; pleased to see no one was willing to disagree with him again.

"Good." said Diesel "This plan is a good plan. They'll not see us coming as we've remained in hiding long enough to convince them that we're not coming out to attack again and once we spring out of our hiding places, they'll be too shocked to do anything and we'll shoot them all dead before they can even launch an attack or make a plan. I assure you, the destruction of Castle Acorn is ascertained with my brilliant mind leading the operation."

"I'm sure it is." muttered the alligator sarcastically.

The other reptiles seemed reluctant to agree with Diesel as they felt the plan wasn't a very good one but after what happened with the

salamander, they didn't dare say anything to him in risk of getting shot.

"I'm glad you agree with me." said Diesel "So now we have a plan, we can sit back and wait a good four days until the awards ceremony begins."

But before Diesel could even begin to get comfortable, the door opened up and in walked Lord Sycorax, Romeo, Vladek and Sora. The look Lord Sycorax had on his face at the mere sight of Diesel was enough to kill a dinosaur. The entire group of reptiles gasped in shock at the sight of their true leader back in the base again. Even Diesel looked like he was about to die of shock right now. He suddenly grew nervous as Lord Sycorax glowered at everybody. The crocodile in the strength-enhancing arm gauntlets and helmet put his hands on his hips and announced to the crowd of reptiles and Diesel.

"Reptile Rebels! Your rightful lord and master has returned!"

The crowd's faces all lit up to hear this good news whereas Diesel fought hard to refrain himself from scowling and throwing a fit at the sight of Lord Sycorax. Romeo and Vladek both smirked at Diesel, giving the Komodo Dragon the idea that they had freed him from the prison and their resigning was nothing more then a ruse to throw him off their plans so they could free Lord Sycorax. He also noticed that they freed Gorton too but Gorton wasn't of any concern to him, nor did any of the other reptiles seem that bothered about Gorton being back too. Lord Sycorax was the main reptile of the region after all. Diesel stood up from his chair and nervously strolled over to Lord Sycorax, the region leader's red eyes narrowing to evil hateful, vengeful slits of pure evilness.

"Lord Sycorax!" blurted Diesel "You…are…you're free! Praise the lizard king! It is a miracle!" he cried in fake joy. Lord Sycorax however, didn't buy it.

"Oh it'll be a miracle alright Diesel…" growled Lord Sycorax, clenching his fists and baring his teeth "If you survive what I have planned for you!"

"Huh?" squeaked Diesel "I…don't understand your lordship. What do you mean?"

"I've been hearing some very nasty stories about you!" snarled Lord Sycorax, advancing on Diesel and making the Komodo Dragon back away in fear "And those stories tell me that you've betrayed me and you've made no attempt to rescue me from my prison! You decided to take my position and leave me in prison to rot! And to top it all, you forbid anyone to try and rescue me!"

"Why what dreadful tales you've been hearing Lord Sycorax!" cried Diesel "I would never do something like this!"

"Oh really?" growled Lord Sycorax coldly "Then does that mean Romeo and Vladek are telling me tall tales or are you denying all this?"

"He's denying all this sir." said the alligator "He made it a rule that anyone who so much as thinks about rescuing you would be tried for treason and executed. He told us all himself."

"It's true." said Romeo "That's what drew the line for us and made me and Vladek have to pretend to resign so we could rescue you without Diesel on our backs."

"Oh really?" shouted Lord Sycorax angrily, his face contorted with rage "I'm ashamed at you Diesel! Taking my position, abusing it the best you can and forbidding anyone to do the right thing and rescue me? You do realize the region can't run without me on their side do you?"

"We've got along just fine without you Lord Sycorax!" retorted Diesel "I've been leading the region just perfectly and they love me as leader much better then you!"

"Right." said Lord Sycorax in a dangerously sinister tone of voice that made Diesel feel nervous "And does the dead body of this poor salamander prove how good a leader you are?"

He picked up the dead salamander and showed it to everybody. Diesel fumed angrily to himself for doing something so stupid, now

Lord Sycorax had him on the ropes.

"If I were to guess, you shot the salamander just because he didn't agree with you!" yelled Lord Sycorax "Am I right reptiles?"

"Yes sir, you are right Lord Sycorax." said the crowd of reptiles in the room.

"Just what I need." said Lord Sycorax dryly, giving the salamander's dead body to the iguana "Take his body and dig a grave for him." he said.

The iguana ran out of the room with the dead salamander in his arms as fast as he could. Lord Sycorax then turned back to Diesel and continued to rage at him.

"You Diesel, are a terrible reptile rebel!" he ranted "Not only did you attempt to leave me locked up forever, you abused the power of leadership and got way too carried away with yourself! A true leader doesn't kill his minions just because they don't agree with his ideas and a leader must satisfy the needs of the soldiers!"

"You're one to talk Sycorax!" snapped Diesel "The only person you care about is yourself! You don't care about us at all you selfish, egotistical crocodile!"

"DON'T YOU DARE SPEAK TO ME LIKE THAT YOU DISLOYAL WRETCH!" bellowed Lord Sycorax, backhanding Diesel directly into a wall as hard as he could "And it is LORD Sycorax to you Diesel! You know that!"

Diesel slid down the wall and slumped on the ground in pain. The Komodo Dragon picked himself up and faced Lord Sycorax again. The crocodile bore over him with his teeth clenched and his eyes burning with rage.

"Any last requests before all hell breaks loose on you?" snarled Lord Sycorax.

"Lord Sycorax please, I can prove myself to be a good reptile rebel!" begged Diesel "I have a plan that'll ensure Castle Acorn's destruction!"

"Oh do you?" said Lord Sycorax in an un-amused manner "What plan might that be then?"

"We're gonna attack the place on the day of the Annual Acorn Awards." explained Diesel "Me and the reptiles are gonna hide strategically around the castle and then leap out and shoot everybody. Once everybody's dead, we'll blow the place up with bazookas. How does that sound?"

Lord Sycorax grabbed Diesel by the throat and hoisted the Komodo Dragon up to his height. He glared straight into his eyes, making him feel rather nervous.

"That is a stupid plan!" roared Lord Sycorax "The stupidest plan I've ever heard! Those Royal Fighters got the best of us last time and they're bound to be at this ceremony! We can't just be too straightforward, that'll be suicide! Especially as I don't have my ship anymore no thanks to my treacherous son and his team mates, we need subtlety and hiding around the castle won't work, especially as there's nowhere to hide around the castle! Not to mention, there'll be lots of people at the awards, they're bound to notice you and the others! This plan is the living example of stupid plans and it'll fail miserably!"

"No it won't!" retorted Diesel "It'll work…"

"No it won't!" roared Lord Sycorax "We need subtlety for this operation and the plan I have has subtlety! My plan will work, because unlike you, I have a brain and I know how to use it, and I've put a lot of thought into it! Your plan will fail so we will not try your plan! One more thing…" he said smoothly "Due to your treachery and poor leadership skills, I demote you to the bottom rank in the region! That'll fix you, you treacherous little leather head!"

Diesel couldn't believe what he had heard. He was being demoted to the bottom rank of the region? This was too much for him! Not only was he going to lose his leadership status, he was going to be the lowest rank in the region? He was not putting up with this indignity! He was going to get rid of Lord Sycorax and remain as leader! Then once he finished with Lord Sycorax, he would kill Romeo and Vladek for bringing this upon him.

"I'm not putting up with this!" yelled Diesel "I refuse to accept you back as leader Sycorax! I challenge you to a battle! A battle for leadership!"

"Do you now?" purred Lord Sycorax "How lovely, I could do with some exercise to get me back in shape after spending a while behind glass. Me and you shall fight in the secret chambers underground. Only we will be in this arena. No one can help you and no one can help me, fair and simple."

"I agree." said Diesel "To make it fairer though, you must fight me without your strength enhancing arm gauntlets."

"I'll happily do so, I don't need them to wipe the floor with you Diesel." gloated Lord Sycorax "Meet me down at the chambers in half an hour and then me and you shall fight for leadership."

"I'll be there!" yelled Diesel "And I'm gonna make you sorry you came back you big hulking waste of flesh and muscle!"

Lord Sycorax resisted the urge to kill Diesel on the spot. Instead, he let go of Diesel and sat down in the leader's chair at the table with the reptile crowd around it. Diesel picked himself up and left the room to prepare for the great battle. The moment he left, Lord Sycorax removed his strength enhancing arm gauntlets and set them down on the table. He put his arms behind his head and leaned back in his chair.

"This is going to be a very enjoyable match I can tell." he said "The winner will be me obviously as no reptile has greater strength then me."

He smiled at the very thought of kicking the tar out of Diesel. As for Sora, he was glad she wouldn't have to watch this fight as nobody was allowed to watch the fight. And yet, Lord Sycorax removing his strength enhancing arm gauntlets provided an opportunity to weaken him. Maybe when no one was looking she could get rid of them. She decided it'd be best to wait until the room was empty and then get rid of them. And maybe she could sabotage the base in someway or another too…

Meanwhile, Sonic and Tails arrived at Nekronopolis. It felt good to see the city again and looking so good again. It'd had been a while since he last visited Nekronopolis*** but it had been even longer since he'd last seen the city itself as when he, Tails and Amy visited the Northern Royal Fighters, they were at their camp a good distance away from the city. As Sonic and Tails walked through the city, they admired the buildings and the rushing traffic that went by. Everything seemed completely normal Some citizens waved at them and greeted them as Sonic and Tails were known the world over and the two just sort of waved back at them.

"Well, there's nothing suspicious or out of the ordinary so far." muttered Sonic "Nekronopolis seems OK right now."

"Well just because it SEEMS OK, it doesn't mean it is." said Tails "There must be something wrong if Nicole can't contact the city. I just can't stop wondering what could possibly be stopping Nicole from contacting Nekronopolis."

"Well whatever it is, we'll find out." said Sonic determinedly "And once we find out, we'll fix the problem and see if Nicole can contact Nekronopolis again."

Then suddenly, the two heroes stopped walking and talking and they both stared at the scenery ahead of them as if something bizarre had just randomly popped out of nowhere and caught their attention. Their jaws dropped. What the saw was the Nekronopolis MPD station with its prison walls blown down and debris all over the place. Some fire fighters were on the scene, putting the fire out that billowed from behind the station. The detonator that blew the back of the prison up had started a mild fire that was soon being brought under control. Sonic and Tails had to investigate this and fast. Something was clearly going on over there.

"Well, THAT looks very suspicious." said Sonic "What the heck happened here?"

"A p-p-prison break it looks like!" squeaked Tails "Let's check it out!"

With that said, the two heroes ran over to the horrifying scene to

investigate what had been going on. To their surprise though, someone had beaten them to it. The Northern Royal Fighters were on the scene and their leader, Miranda Mongoose, was talking to the prison warden Maverick the Badger. Maverick had a bandage wrapped around his arm and he was dabbing a stinging cut on his face that was pretty serious.

"So you mean to tell me that two reptiles from the Region of Rebellious Reptiles appeared and pretended to surrender to you and then the walls just suddenly blew up?" said Miranda, hoping she'd gotten everything."

"Yes Miranda." said Maverick "The walls just blew up without warning. One of the reptiles whipped out a remote, pressed a button and then suddenly the walls blew up."

"So, does this prison have exploding walls then?" asked Thunder the Chipmunk.

"No you clot!" snapped Bolt the Chipmunk "Someone obviously set bombs on the walls and that reptile just set them off!"

"I knew that." lied Thunder.

"No you didn't you fibber." said Bolt.

"Boys, shut up before I let you have it with my electro-prod!" snapped Miranda crossly "Now where was I? Oh yes," she turned back to Maverick and continued speaking to him "Did anyone escape from the prison after the walls exploded?"

"Everyone on the yard fled for it." muttered Maverick "Including… Lord Sycorax and his mate Gorton."

"Oh no! Not Lord Sycorax!" squealed Kari the Rat "He's the leader of the region! Now he's free, who knows what's going to happen now!"

"Hey guys." said Sonic, strolling up to the Northern Royal Fighters "How's it going?"

"Sonic!" cried Miranda happily "What a surprise this is! I wasn't expecting to see you anytime soon! And you've brought Tails too,

even better!"

"This hedgehog's full of surprises." said Sonic snidely "So, what's happened here then?"

"According to the warden, two reptiles from the Region of Rebellious Reptiles blew the walls up and the region leader Lord Sycorax has escaped in the carnage." said Miranda with a grave expression on her face "I believe you probably know what the Region of Rebellious Reptiles is as the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters have been in conflict with it according to information from the vaults."

"I…do actually." said Sonic as he thought on it "My buddies told me that while me, Tails and Amy were with you, the region attacked Castle Acorn while we were gone but my buddies and the Chaotix beat them back. I tussled with um, Lord Sycorax, during a prison riot in Empire City five months ago**** and he didn't seem like much. Scourge destroyed the prison in Empire City so Lord Sycorax had to be relocated here and now he's escaped."

"That's really bad isn't it?" asked Tails "According to our friends, the Region of Rebellious Reptiles are anarchists who try to purge the world of policy and now their leader's free again, they'll probably get back into action now."

"It IS bad." said Kari grimly "I've read about the region and I know how bad they can be. Those reptiles will stop at nothing to make sure governments and political landmarks no longer exist."

"Boy will I be looking forward to kicking their butts should I ever face them!" muttered Sonic "What a bunch of jerks they are! But one thing I don't understand is why can't Nicole contact Nekronopolis? Is there something odd going on here?"

"There is." said Miranda "Kate found this on the roof of the building."

Kate the Eagle, Miranda's old school friend and team bruiser stood forward and showed Sonic and Tails the signal scrambling device that Romeo and Vladek set up with the recon drone earlier. Sonic and Tails stared at it but they had no idea what it was.

"What is it?" asked Sonic.

"It's a signal scrambling device." said Kari "Once set up, it'll block any call to Nekronopolis and nobody will be able to pick the city up on satellite. I guess somebody wanted this operation to be a mystery."

"No wonder Nicole can't contact Nekronopolis, that device was scrambling the signals." Tails deduced "I bet nobody else anywhere can contact Nekronopolis with that thing on."

"Not anymore as this thing's going to the scrap yard!" yelled Sonic, snatching the device from Kate and spin-dashing it to pieces.

The device lay on the ground in pieces after that spin-dash. Now the device was destroyed, Sonic rolled up his glove and spoke into the communications device he always had hidden there. He was going to see if he could contact Mobotropolis now the device was gone.

"Yo Nicole? You read me?" asked Sonic.

"Loud and clear Sonic." Nicole's voice came from the device "Have you found out what's going on over at Nekronopolis?"

"I have Nicole, and you're not gonna like it…" said Sonic as he prepared to give Nicole the rundown on what he and the Northern Royal Fighters had just discovered…

Back at the Region of Rebellious Reptile's base, Lord Sycorax and Diesel went down to the underground chambers that were deep down underground under the base's floors. The chambers were mostly there for weapons testing and combat training and now, Lord Sycorax and Diesel were going to settle a score with each other. This fight of theirs was going to determine who had the rights to be leader and who the strongest reptile was. Lord Sycorax had removed his strength-enhancing arm gauntlets so this fight would be fairer and Diesel hadn't equipped himself with anything whatsoever. The chambers were empty save for the two reptiles ready to have a throw-down with each other and everybody else in the region were

locked out so there wouldn't be any interferences and the outcome of the battle would be a surprise to them. Romeo and Vladek were convinced heavily that Lord Sycorax was going to win as he was a strong crocodile and the very reptile who formed the region. His strength enhancing arm gauntlets only made him impossible to defeat, he was still strong without them, much strong then Diesel so he had this fight in the bag. Diesel however had been active all the time Lord Sycorax had been imprisoned so Lord Sycorax may falter a little but Lord Sycorax had been keeping in shape in the exercise yard so he was still his usual powerful self. Down in the chambers, Lord Sycorax and Diesel stepped out into the arena and they circled each other, their teeth baring and their fists clenched as they prepared to make the first move.

"So Diesel, you decided to show up." purred Lord Sycorax mockingly "I should have known you'd do so as you never back down from a challenge, especially one you wagered."

"This is one fight I can't miss." said Diesel with a cocky grin on his face "I'm not going to serve you ever again! I hated you as leader Lord Sycorax! Your narcissistic attitude and mean treatment to those who fail you irked me to the point I plotted to assassinate you! Instead, I'm going to fight you to the death!"

"Yes you are and it'll be YOUR death Diesel!" retorted Lord Sycorax "And you can't comment on my leadership skills when you yourself are no better! You kill those who say no to you and you rely to much on muscle and not enough on brains! That's bad leadership skills if I ever saw them!"

"Who needs brains anyway?" snapped Diesel "Brute strength prevails in everything!"

"Wrong Diesel, the brain is the mightiest weapon of all." corrected Lord Sycorax "Why have tremendous strength if you haven't got the brains to use it properly and to it's best potential?"

Diesel just growled at Lord Sycorax. How dare that chump make fun of his strength? He was really going to break his snout now!

"Enough mindless banter! Let's kill each other already!" cried Diesel.

"Oh you're so eager for a grave aren't you, you silly little Komodo Dragon?" purred Lord Sycorax evilly "I'll be happy to make a headstone for you. I'll put it on it "Here lies Diesel the Gormless Little Dumbwat who has no idea what the bloody hell he's doing."! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

That did it, Diesel roared at Lord Sycorax and he charged at the crocodile with the red eyes and armour pieces. Diesel leaped into the air and punched Lord Sycorax directly in the face. Lord Sycorax hurled backwards across the room at an amazing speed and he landed slap bang into the wall. He crashed into the wall so hard that he dented it and bent the jet boosters on the back of his armour piece. He wouldn't be able to fly now but he didn't want to fly anyway, he didn't think he'd need to in this fight. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and he stroked his throbbing snout. But for some eerie reason, he smiled at Diesel as if the punch didn't even hurt him and more tickled him more then anything.

"Well, you've still got it Diesel." he complimented "Good, I feared this battle was going to be too easy."

"Thank you." said Diesel sarcastically "I like to give my victims a challenge after all."

With that said, Diesel ran over to Lord Sycorax and prepared to deck him again. Lord Sycorax smirked at Diesel and he leaped out of the way, leaving Diesel to punch the wall and give himself a sore fist. Diesel bellowed in pain and he clutched his aching fist. This gave Lord Sycorax the perfect opportunity to unleash hell on Diesel. He roundhouse punched the Komodo Dragon in the jaws and then gave him an uppercut that sent him cart wheeling through the air. Diesel spiralled through the air and crashed down onto the floor. Diesel picked himself up and eased the pain in his jaw. Lord Sycorax sprinted towards Diesel and clasped his fists together, ready to fist slam him. Diesel however beat him to it by springing up and poking him sharply in the gut. Lord Sycorax doubled over and gasped hoarsely in pain. Diesel then kneed Lord Sycorax in the jaw while he was bent over, roundhouse punched him twice in the face, one punch on each side, and then he elbow thrusted Lord Sycorax in the neck. Lord Sycorax slammed down onto the floor stomach first and he rubbed his throbbing neck. He felt like he'd just taken a bullet to

it. Diesel slammed his foot down on Lord Sycorax as hard as he could and then he kicked the region leader at full force.

"Come on Lord Sycorax, I'm not even trying here!" taunted Diesel "Don't tell me you've weakened during your time in prison!"

"I haven't traitor!" snapped Lord Sycorax, picking himself up "I've been working out vigorously on the exercise yard so I'm still in great shape! I just haven't been in a fight for a while but it won't take me long to get back into the lingo!"

Lord Sycorax was quick to adapt after all so it wouldn't take him long to get back into a fighting motive. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and he charged towards Diesel. Diesel bent down so that he was staring straight at the floor and Lord Sycorax ran into him. Diesel grabbed Lord Sycorax and stood up straight, throwing the anarchistic crocodile over him and onto his back. Lord Sycorax sprung back onto his feet and tripped Diesel up with his tail. Diesel was brought down onto this back and he grimaced in pain. Lord Sycorax grabbed Diesel by his armour and he tossed him into a wall head first. If Diesel wasn't wearing a helmet, the impact would have killed him instantly. Diesel crashed into the wall and slid down it and onto the floor. The Komodo Dragon clutched his head and groaned like a ghoul in a graveyard. Lord Sycorax sprinted over to Diesel and he grabbed the treacherous lizard by his tail. He dragged Diesel out into the centre of the room and began to spin him around in a perfect circle at a terrific speed. Diesel cried out as he was spun around and around in a circle. Lord Sycorax spun Diesel around as fast as he could and then he let go of the Komodo Dragon's tail, sending him rocketing across the room at a speed that could rival a whizzing dart. Diesel had been thrown so hard he almost reached the wall at the far end of the room. Instead, he hurled down to the floor and skidded across it into the wall. Diesel grimaced in pain and he rubbed his throbbing chin. His armour had protected him from the scrape across the floor but his chin wasn't covered so that got it. Lord Sycorax exploded into a fit of mocking laughter at his rebellious bruiser.

"Do you call this a fight Diesel?" sneered Lord Sycorax "The cyborg rabbit who challenged me on my ship put up a much better fight then you did! And I had my arm gauntlets on in that fight!"

"Keep…taunting…me…Sycorax!" growled Diesel, picking himself up "All you're doing…is making me more determined…to dethrone you!"

"Well if that's the case then put more effort into this futile display of yours." taunted Lord Sycorax "I'm beginning to get bored here."

Diesel roared as loud as he could, his roar echoing around the room ominously, and he charged towards Lord Sycorax like a wolf chasing down its prey. Lord Sycorax just stood there and folded his arms, waiting for him to come. Diesel pounced on Lord Sycorax but the region leader struck the first blow by backhanding him down onto the floor. Diesel landed with a heavy crash on the floor and Lord Sycorax attempted to stomp on him but Diesel rolled out of the way, leaving Lord Sycorax to stomp the floor instead. Diesel picked himself up and roundhouse punched Sycorax in the jaw. He then grabbed the armoured snout cover on his helmet and ripped it clean off, leaving his snout exposed now. Diesel bit Lord Sycorax on the snout, leaving heavy puncture wounds on it, and making Lord Sycorax roar in pain. Diesel then hammered Lord Sycorax around the head with the ripped off snout cover and he uppercut Lord Sycorax straight up into the air. Lord Sycorax rocketed straight up into the air like a missile and he sailed back down like a falling rock. Diesel then leaped up into the air and fist slammed Sycorax down into the floor before he could finish falling. Lord Sycorax crashed into the floor and grimaced in excruciating pain. Diesel cackled maniacally and he charged towards Lord Sycorax double quick. He leaped into the air and was about to hammer him with his powerful scaly tail (real life Komodo Dragons sword-fight with them!) but Lord Sycorax rolled out of the way and backhanded Diesel down onto the floor just as he sailed past him. Lord Sycorax climbed back onto his feet and he kicked Diesel before he could stand back up. Diesel clambered back up and he braced himself for another attack.

"That's better." said Lord Sycorax, rubbing his snout "Keep it up and this battle will be one worth fighting."

"You won't think it's worth fighting when I end up snapping your jaws off!" snarled Diesel.

The two reptiles lunged for each other and they punched at each

other at a force that could make the Incredible Hulk feel jealous…

Meanwhile, Sora had opted to stay in the meeting room. Her excuse for it was to make sure there's no change in the region's atmosphere and to make sure everything was still fully operational. Romeo and Vladek had willingly granted her this kind of task so they left her alone to do what she said she was going to do. The moment she was alone though, Sora switched her disguise off and began pondering to herself. She was relived to be out of her disguise as she wasn't enjoying being Gorton at all.

"OK, I'm alone, in an important room, in the Region of Rebellious Reptile's base." she said to herself "What kind of sabotage can I do in here?"

She admired the huge table that had many seats placed around it. The reptiles all sat to the table whenever a meeting was going on much like before. A brilliant thought crept into Sora's bright little head.

"If I had some kind of bomb…I could hide one under the table and set it to blow." mused Sora "But one bomb wouldn't do much in a base this size. It'd be best to set bombs up all over the base more then anything. Now if only I knew where some bombs were. As for Lord Sycorax's strength-enhancing arm gauntlets." she added, looking at the arm gauntlets that lay on the table "I could get rid of these if I wanted to but Lord Sycorax might notice they're gone and Romeo and Vladek will pin this on me as I'm the only one here so I can't get rid of them. I CAN sabotage them though…"

She grabbed one of the gauntlets and she looked hard at it, hoping to find someway of getting into the inner workings and mechanical structures. She found a rectangular shape on the underside of the gauntlet. She gathered that this was one way of getting into the gauntlet. She pulled out her laser stick from her hair and pointed it at the gauntlet. Sora activated the laser and she melted the edges of the rectangle. After doing so, the rectangle shape fell out of the gauntlet, showing Sora the workings and circuitry inside that made it what it was, a strength enhancing gauntlet you wore on your arm.

Sora smiled slyly to herself (she is a fox after all) and she ripped some of the circuitry out of the gauntlet. The gauntlet was now nothing more then a fancy arm attachment that just made you look tough now. Sora set her laser stick to weld and she welded the rectangle back onto the gauntlet. She did it so tidily; it looked like it had never been removed at all. Sora then proceeded to sabotage the other gauntlet. She opened it up with her laser stick, ripped the circuitry out, and sealed it back up. Now both gantlets were useless. Sora put them back onto the table, making sure to put them back in the exact same position so no one would notice. Sora looked grimly at the circuitry that she'd torn out of the gauntlets and pondered to herself. How could she hide these then? She then noticed a shaft in the corner of the room. This was the waste shaft, anything that was rubbish went down the shaft to the rubbish room. Sora scooped up all the circuitry she'd torn out and threw it down the shaft. The circuitry was going to be scrapped now so Lord Sycorax would have to build new circuitry for the gauntlets. Sora dusted her hands off and laughed to herself.

"Oh Sora, you sly old fox." she chortled "Lord Sycorax is going to go purple with rage when he finds out his gauntlets aren't working. Now, about blowing the base up, how can I do that if I don't even know where to find some detonators?"

Being as this was the meeting room, Sora gathered she wouldn't find any bombs here. She decided to look for the weapons' vault elsewhere. She switched her disguise back on and left the meeting room in search of a weapons' storage room or vault or anything containing weapons. She was going to put the region in turmoil and all she needed were some detonators to set off in the base. Boy would she love to see the region's faces once their base was destroyed…!

Back in the chambers, the fight between Lord Sycorax and Diesel was beginning to get all the more hectic. The two reptiles were throwing their best into the match and trying their best to floor one another. And yet, their strength seemed evenly matched as sometimes, Lord Sycorax gained an edge and sometimes, Diesel began to gain the upper hand. Who was going to win was anyone's

guess now. Lord Sycorax grabbed Diesel and hoisted the Komodo Dragon up above his head in wrestler fashion. He then slammed Diesel down onto the floor as hard as he could, making the Komodo Dragon cry out in pain. Lord Sycorax sneered at him and then he tail-whipped Diesel over onto his stomach. Diesel picked himself up and tail-whipped Lord Sycorax as hard as he could. Lord Sycorax gasped in pain as he felt the power of Diesel's stiff, powerful tail. Diesel then uppercut Lord Sycorax in the chin and made him stagger backwards and Diesel then dropkicked Lord Sycorax onto his back. Diesel pounced on Lord Sycorax but Lord Sycorax pushed him off with his feet and sent him hurling over onto his face. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and lowered his head. Diesel picked himself up, only to get head butted by Lord Sycorax and thrown across the room. Diesel however, adjusted himself and bounced off the wall with his feet. He ran on all fours towards Sycorax and he pounced on him like a tiger but Lord Sycorax grabbed him by his neck and slammed him down onto the floor. Lord Sycorax let go of him so he could attack him again but Diesel walloped him in the face with his tail. Lord Sycorax clutched his throbbing face and Diesel added insult to injury by slashing him across the stomach. Lord Sycorax screamed in pain and he clutched his stomach, which now had three large red cuts on it. He already had scars on his left arm from Vector, he didn't need scars on his stomach too. Lord Sycorax lunged at Diesel but Diesel backhanded him onto the floor. Diesel then grabbed Lord Sycorax by his tail and swung him over onto his back as if he was a hammer being used to hit a nail. Lord Sycorax kicked Diesel's hands to make him let go of his tail and he leaped back onto his feet. He head-butted Diesel again, making him skid backwards and Diesel head-butted him back. Diesel roundhouse punched Lord Sycorax in the face and then dropkicked him in the stomach and then gave him an uppercut with his tail. Lord Sycorax just managed to refrain from falling and he retaliated with a left and right hook each to the face. Diesel rubbed his face better and he socked Lord Sycorax in the nose. Lord Sycorax uppercut Diesel and sent him hurling backwards a good distance and the Komodo Dragon landed sharply on his back. He was about to get back up but before he could, Lord Sycorax lunged at him and pinned him down onto the floor. He then clamped his jaws around Diesel's neck and throttled him with them. Diesel gagged and spluttered hoarsely as Lord Sycorax's tough jaws clamped around his throat and his teeth

penetrated it. Diesel gave out a wheezing gasp of last breath before falling limp under Sycorax's body. His head drooped to one side, meaning that he was dead now. Lord Sycorax let go of Diesel's throat and the Komodo Dragon slumped on the floor, blood pouring from his neck. No one could survive getting bitten in the neck by jaws as powerful as Lord Sycorax's. Diesel was completely dead now. Lord Sycorax smirked at the dead Komodo Dragon and he walked away from him.

"Diesel's ambitions ended up being his downfall." he gloated to himself "He deserved this death. Although it would have been better if I just knocked him out and inserted a brain-chip into his head to make him loyal to me, it was a case of kill or be killed so it had to be done."

He walked out of the chambers and took the elevator up to the base above ground. As the elevator whisked him up, he smiled at himself.

"Now I'm back in the region and my leadership is back, I can get the region back into shape." he said to himself "First, I'll give everybody in the region sans Romeo, Vladek and Gorton, brain-chips so they will be unwaveringly loyal to me and no one will ever betray me ever again. Then, we wait four days and I unleash my plan to get rid of Castle Acorn once and for all."

He cackled to himself as he began to picture the destruction of Castle Acorn and the deaths of the R.F.S. and the Chaotix in his foul, evil mind. Four days time was going to be a wait that'll nearly kill him but it'll be worth the wait to see the destruction of Castle Acorn and the deaths of its occupants and especially his wayward son Vector…

As for Sora, she'd been doing a thorough search of the base while no one was looking and she finally found the room she was looking for. A weapons vault. Unfortunately for her, the door was coded and she had no idea what the code was but she had a way of getting into the vault. She took an EMP bomb off her belt and she attached it to the wall. She stood back from the door and the EMP bomb went off, sending an electromagnetic pulse that short-circuited the keypad

and opened the door. Sora opened the door and stepped into the vault. The vault was full to the brim of weapons of every kind and they were all stored in labelled boxes. Sora spotted a box containing bombs and she looked in it quickly. The box contained loads of detonators and a remote that set off the detonators. Sora smiled to herself as a brilliant idea popped into her head.

"Boy will the region base be needing repairs when I'm finished with it…" she purred to herself in a strangely evil tone, a tone that sounded weird coming out of her.

This plan of hers was going to be a heavy wound on the region's pride once she carried it out. She had to wait four days before carrying it out though but it would be worth it if it meant the Region of Rebellious Reptiles' base being destroyed…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 93**

**** See Arc 7**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 70**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 88**

Lord Sycorax is back in the buisness and ready to carry out his usual streak of anarchism! But will Sora stop him? And can Sonic and friends stop him too? Join me next time for the exciting finale next time! Reviews are welcome.

Stratagem of the Reptiles 4

Arc 11: Stratagem of the Reptiles

Takes place five months after Story 93 and a month before Story 94

Part 4: Medals and Malice

"Sonic, Tails, please tells us what you found out while you were at Nekronopolis." said her Royal Highness Queen Sally Acorn.

Sonic and Tails had just been on a mission to find out what was going on at Nekronopolis since Nicole the Lynx, the Castle's lady-in-waiting and beauty queen, couldn't contact the city for some reason. Sonic and Tails met the Northern Royal Fighters there and learnt everything they could from them. Sonic and Tails bowed down to Sally and then they gave their findings.

"OK. Sally, you are really, really, REALLY not gonna like this." said Sonic "But here's what we've found out. Tails, you take it from here."

"OK." said Tails, stepping forward "Sally, a prison break has gone on at Nekronopolis. When me and Sonic arrived at the city, we noticed that the Nekronopolis MPD station was smoking around the back and the walls had been blown down. We saw Miranda and her team questioning the warden and according to what the warden told them, two reptiles from the Region of Rebellious Reptiles blew the walls down somehow and they fled with Lord Sycorax in tow. The reason Nicole couldn't contact Nekronopolis was because they had set up a signal scrambling device that prevents anyone from contacting Nekronopolis, anyone in Nekronopolis contacting anybody else and satellites from picking them up. It's quite clear those reptiles wanted the breakout to remain secret."

Sally was so shocked to hear news like this that she almost fell out of her throne. Nicole looked like she wanted to faint beside her but the lynx relaxed herself. Sally caught herself and she spoke.

"Lord Sycorax…is free?" she gasped "Two reptiles broke him out of prison?"

"You got it Queenie." said Sonic "Looks like the Region of Rebellious Reptiles were missing their leader too much. Even though I haven't met the jerks yet, I'm looking forward to battling them and making them pay for trying to get rid of policy!"

"But how did they even succeed?" cried Sally "A super spy named Sora Sumdac told us their plan and we in turn told everybody else! They should have seen the breakout coming and prevented it!"

"I think those reptiles KNEW they had been spied on so they changed tactics." suggested Nicole "After all, why stick with a plan if everybody knows what you're plotting?"

"You have a point there Nicole." said Sally "Sora didn't mention anything about signal scrambling devices and blowing walls up so the region must have changed their plan. It was very darn crafty of them too to do that." she added bitterly.

"Who's Sora?" asked Sonic.

"A spy from the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit." explained Sally "She was the one that told us there was a breakout attempt in the first place. It's just a pity her attempts were in vain as the reptiles who saved Lord Sycorax changed tactics. What must that poor girl be thinking when she finds out her attempts to prevent this breakout have failed?"

"I can imagine she'll be very furious." said Nicole sadly "Very furious once she finds out what's happened."

"Well if we ever meet this, Sora, we'll ask her if she wants to join in the butt-kicking when the reptiles next attack." said Sonic "Now their leader's free, I bet they'll be attacking anytime soon."

"Yes, anytime soon." muttered Sally "Just Sycorax had to get out so close to the Annual Acorn Awards. They're only four days away and I have a horrible feeling Sycorax knows it too."

"Well since the whole R.F.S. will be there, those reptiles will have a

very heavy resistance to deal with." said Nicole "They can attack us on the day of the Acorn Awards if they want to, we'll all be there and they'll not be able to take us ALL on."

"I just hope you're right Nicole." said Sally, laying back in her throne with a nervous sigh "We beat them before so we can beat them again, especially as they haven't got a ship this time."

As bad as the news of Sycorax's break out was, it seemed it wasn't going to be as bad as everyone thought it was going to be, especially since Sora was already IN the region's territory and spying on them as they spoke…

Four days came and went faster then anyone could have anticipated and right now, Lord Sycorax was standing before the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and announcing to the Reptile Rebels that it was time to put their plan into action. The island they inhabited was a long way away from Mobotropolis so it would take them a few hours at the most to get to Mobotropolis, hence the reason Lord Sycorax was telling everybody the plan right now in the early morning. That way everybody would have plenty of time to get prepared for the big operation before they left on their long trek to shore. The Reptile Rebels had all gathered into the common room for Lord Sycorax's testimony and they eagerly awaited for their leader to speak. Romeo the Chameleon and Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard stood beside him on the stage and Sora stood in the crowd in her Gorton disguise. She eagerly awaited Lord Sycorax's testimony so she could tell everybody what the region was up to. Not to mention, she also had a way of weakening the region and it required a box full of detonators she'd found in the weapons vault. The only catch though was were the region going to use it? If they did then her plan wouldn't work. Sora kept her fingers crossed and prayed they weren't going to need a box of detonators for this. As for Lord Sycorax, he opened up his big enormous jaws and he spoke to the Reptile Rebels in the room.

"Attention Reptile Rebels." he announced in an obnoxiously loud voice "I have an announcement to make to all of you."

The Reptile Rebels all awaited for Lord Sycorax to give his announcement.

"First off, let's get one thing out of the way." said Lord Sycorax "As you all know, Diesel was a very disloyal reptile to me and he got killed for his treachery four days ago. Some of you reptiles didn't like that as you were foolishly loyal to Diesel and not me so in order to prevent further treacheries, all of you sans Romeo, Vladek and Gorton have had brain-chips installed in your heads. So now you're all loyal to me and no one else. Is that correct?"

"Yes master, it is." droned the crowd in unison as if they were a crowd of robots and not reptiles.

"Good." said Lord Sycorax with a devilish grin on his face "The chips seem to be working as you're all loyal to me and you obey me without question so the operation, that took a good while to finish, was a success at least. Anyways, here's my announcement. Today is the day of the Annual Acorn Awards, a yearly celebration hosted by the rulers of Castle Acorn as you all know."

"Yes master." droned the crowd.

"Well, we're going to destroy Castle Acorn on this very day." explained Lord Sycorax "Seems appropriate to destroy Castle Acorn on the day of their annual award's ceremony doesn't it? Moving on, the awards take place at Mobotropolis tonight. We're gonna leave here at twelve o' clock sharp and arrive in time to set up the operation. The time of the awards is 7pm and not a second later so we must be prepared by then once we arrive at the city. Now, here is the plan, and needless to say it's a brilliant one of course as I, the brilliant Lord Sycorax have thought it up and carefully contrived it with my own brain which I happen to use exceptionally well…"

Boy does he talk a lot! thought Sora in annoyance *I'm amazed nobody gets fed up with him once he gets going!*

"…the plan is…" began Lord Sycorax after he'd finally finished bragging about himself "I'll take a small squad to Castle Acorn. Me, Romeo, Vladek, Gorton and six foot soldiers of the highest ranks will be the ones to accompany me on this mission. The rest of the region

will wait on the seas until I give the order. We reptiles will go over to Mobotropolis and start the fun. Everyone but me and Gorton will be wearing these on the mission."

He picked up a box that sat beside his foot and he opened it. He showed the crowd what was inside the box and the crowd peered at the box. To Sora's surprise, the box contained holo-disguise emitters! The region of Rebellious Reptiles had holo-disguise emitters just like the M.S.I.U. did? She had to discover how they got such technology despite the fact only super spies had them! Lord Sycorax continued speaking as he closed the box.

"These holo-disguise emitters will help us blend into the crowd." he explained "Knock out any random citizen you can, scan their form and disguise yourself as that citizen. Once you're in disguise, you will wait in the crowd while Gorton, who will be my sniper for this mission, prepares to shoot Queen Sally Acorn. Once he shoots Sally Acorn, ditch your disguises and then order everybody to surrender. Then, when the resistance shows up, as we all know they will for this kind of ceremony, I'll call in reinforcements and then the whole region will attack with hovercraft and walker drones. Then we lay siege to the castle and destroy the R.F.S. once and for all!"

"YAY!" cheered the crowd except for Sora.

The disguised spy just smiled at herself, pleased to hear this plan and she knew the millions of ways she could foil it. The crowd stopped cheering and Lord Sycorax continued to speak.

"The plan is fool proof." he said "It can't possibly fail and once the night is done, we can add Castle Acorn to our destroyed political landmarks list! Ha, ha, ha! I do hope my wayward son Vector will be at the ceremony so I can teach him a lesson for deserting me and helping the R.F.S. defeat me the first time*!"

"I hope he is too." said Romeo "He deserves to die for daring to back out of the region. Nobody says no to the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and leaves with their hearts still beating after all."

"Yeah, nobody deserts the region and lives!" put in Vladek hotly.

This bit of information surprised Sora very much. She knew who Vector the Crocodile was as the M.S.I.U. had info on the R.F.S. and their allies but she had no idea he and Lord Sycorax were related! That just made her more determined to bring Lord Sycorax to justice, so she could please a friend of Sonic the Hedgehog's as she did so.

"Well, now you know the plan reptiles, you may begin packing for the mission." said Lord Sycorax "We leave in two hours so be ready by then. You're all dismissed."

The whole region did as they were told and they left the common room to prepare for the mission. As for Sora, she hurriedly ran over to the weapons vault while no one was looking and she went inside double quick. Luckily for her, the mission didn't seem to require detonators. They were using guns and vehicles for this operation so the box of detonators were all hers to use. Now Sora was in the weapons vault, she grabbed the box of detonators and she rummaged through it. She found the remote for the detonators and she yanked it out of the box, making sure she wasn't being too loud. She looked at the remote and began joggling the settings. She set the detonators on auto-explode and she set the timer on them for four hours and thirty minutes. The region was leaving in two hours so that gave them another two hours to get away from the island before the detonators went off and once two hours and thirty minutes had passed, the whole box would go off and hopefully, take the base with it. There was a sizable batch in the box so all those detonators would at least do some considerable damage to the base. Now Sora had dealt with that, she sealed the box back up and left the weapons vault double quick and ran off to Gorton's dressing room. She found the dressing room and she dived into the room as fast as she could and she locked the door behind her so nobody could get in and see what she was doing. Now Sora was completely alone in her own little room, she switched her disguise off and rolled up her left glove. She had the holo-disguise emitter under her right glove and under her left glove, she had a communications device. She switched the communicator on and spoke into it quietly so nobody passing by the room would hear her natural female voice in the room instead of Gorton's.

"Hello? Castle Acorn?" she whispered "Do you read me? Hello?"

The communicator fuzzed for a moment before suddenly ringing with Nicole's voice on the other side.

"Hello, this is Nicole the Lynx of Castle Acorn. Who is this?" asked Nicole.

"It's me, Sora Sumdac of the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit." whispered Sora "I'm currently undercover in the Region of Rebellious Reptile's base."

"You're where?" blurted Nicole "Oh my gosh, you're in the Region of Rebellious Reptile's actual headquarters?"

"I am." said Sora "I've disguised myself with a holo-disguise emitter in order to sneak in unnoticed although I'm out of it right now to tell you this."

"Oh Sora, you brilliant little spy!" cried Nicole "You've gone into Reptile Rebel territory in disguise and you're actually in the base right now! What have you found out?"

"Their entire plan for their next attack." muttered Sora "Listen to me because I don't have much time and I'm gonna have to explain everything at once."

"I have a notebook and pen with me right now." answered Nicole "I'll write everything down so I don't forget. Now please, tell me everything you know."

Sora paused for a moment and listened for what was going on outside the room to make sure nobody was around. There was nobody walking around the corridors outside so Sora began to tell Nicole everything she knew.

"Okay, here's their plan." whispered Sora just loud enough for Nicole to hear clearly "They're going to attack the castle tonight at the exact time the Annual Acorn Awards begin. Got that?"

"Yes." replied Nicole as she scribbled the notes down.

"Lord Sycorax is taking a squadron to Mobotropolis to set things up." continued Sora "He's taking Romeo, Vladek, me and six soldiers of the highest ranks to the city. The reptiles will be wearing holo-disguise emitters so they can disguise themselves as somebody and fit into the crowd. Me and Sycorax are the exceptions. I will be expected to be the sniper for the mission and I'm supposed to shoot Queen Sally."

"I can't guarantee you'll be doing such a thing." laughed Nicole as she continued to write down what Sora was telling her.

"No I won't, I'll shoot HIM instead!" snickered Sora quietly "Now, after Sally gets shot, which she won't, the reptiles will reveal themselves and demand surrender. Then once the R.F.S. attempts to resist, they'll bring in the rest of the region, which is waiting on the seas for his orders, and attack with hovercraft and walker drones. The region is massive and with all those vehicles, the R.F.S. doesn't stand a chance against them all. Well, maybe Sonic will but that's beside the point. Have you got everything?"

"Every detail dear." replied Nicole "Thank you so much for giving me this information Sora. You've been a credit to us all for risking your life to find this kind of information in order to stop the Region of Rebellious Reptiles from destroying Mobotropolis' only standing relic from the old city."

"Don't mention it Nicole." said Sora "I'm a super spy, it's my job to save lives. So, you have any ideas on how to counterattack the region now you know what their plan is?"

"Yes indeed Sora." said Nicole "Many actually. I'll explain them all to Sally once I've told her what you've told me. Thank you once again Sora and god bless you and your organization."

"Many thanks." said Sora casually "I'll be coming with the region on this mission so I'll be seeing you later. Goodbye Nicole."

"Goodbye Sora, take care of yourself out there." said Nicole as Sora prepared to switch off.

Sora switched off the communicator and she switched her Gorton

disguise back on. She smiled to herself as she left the dressing up room wondered around the corridors aimlessly, not really knowing where to go.

Boy am I going to enjoy tonight when Lord Sycorax's plan blows up in his face thanks to me! she thought to herself *When this night is over, the region will be in turmoil and Sycorax will be back in prison where he belongs! Sora Sumdac, you have really outdone yourself this time!*

Sora couldn't wait for tonight to come. The Region of Rebellious Reptiles' plan was going to fail miserable now she'd told Nicole their plan and she was going to tell Sally and then the R.F.S. This was going to go down in history as the region's worst defeat ever when the day was done…

Back at Castle Acorn, Queen Sally Acorn was admiring the view outside the window in her bedroom. Despite the fact she'd been finding it hard to find a suitable dress for the ceremony, she'd finally decided (just minutes ago to be precise! It took her all four days to decide! Snicker!) what she was going to wear and now she was taking a moment to relax and admire the view a moment. It filled her heart with joy to see that New Mobotropolis, the reconstructed city of Mobotropolis was close to completion. In a couple of months time, it would be ready for opening. This city was going to be the perfect tribute to Old Mobotropolis and unlike the old city, Dr. Eggman wouldn't be destroying it** as they had some new additions that would protect the city from any attack he launched. Sally's face beamed with pride as she admired the nearly finished New Mobotropolis from her bedroom window. She couldn't wait for its grand opening when it was complete.

"Oh how time goes by." she said to herself "To think that a long time ago, this used to be Old Mobotropolis and then in the blink of an eye, it was destroyed by that fat devil Dr. Eggman, and in a couple of months time, New Mobotropolis will be ready for opening. I can't wait to see the finished city and what I won't give to see Eggman's face when he tries to bombard the city only to fail miserably thanks to the new additions to the city we've secretly added."

Her little chat to no one but herself was interrupted by a polite knock on the door. Sally knew only one person in the entire castle who knocked like that so she answered.

"Come in Nicole." she said brightly.

Nicole opened the door and let herself into the room. She was carrying her paper of notes she'd made after Sora told her what she'd found out while in Reptile Rebel territory and she wondered up to Sally with it.

"Sally, you're not going to believe this," said Nicole slowly but calmly "But Sora's at it again. She's disguised herself as a reptile and is hiding amongst the region of Rebellious Reptiles in order to see what they're up to now Sycorax has escaped. She's found out her plan and I've written it here."

She handed the note to Sally. Sally took the note from Nicole and she scanned in closely. The Region's plan was indeed a very good plan and even someone with a heart of gold like Sally had to admit it. She was quite shocked to read that they were planning to attack the castle on this very day but because Sora knew their plan and Nicole had written it down and given her the details, she knew they were coming and she had a plan on how to stop them now so Sally didn't show any signs of concern at all after reading the note. Instead, she had a rather sly smirk that looked eerie on her.

"Nicole, I'm going to write the M.S.I.U. a thank you letter for this." said Sally happily "They've contributed so greatly to us these past days I don't know what to say about it. First they try to prevent a prison break and now they've found out the region's next move. And now we know it, we can counter attack."

"I have some ideas on how we can foil their plan Sally." said Nicole "I bet you're coming up with some too."

"I am Nicole." said Sally "Let's discuss our ideas between us and see which ones are the best."

With that said, the two huddled close to each other and began whispering plans to each other like a group of girls whispering

secrets to each other in the school playground. The two ladies were very pleased to know what the region's plan was thanks to Sora's excellent spying skills because they could now counterattack and the ideas they had now were guaranteed to be successful counterattacks against the plotting region. Lord Sycorax wouldn't know what hit him…

A good few hours passed by and dusk began to fall over Mobius. 7pm was nearing and the Annual Acorn Awards were almost beginning. As of this moment, the whole Region of Rebellious Reptiles were arriving at the shores of Sonic's home country, the country where Mobotropolis and Castle Acorn were. There was a whole fleet of hover craft, some containing walker drones in transportation mode and some without walker drones and they all followed Lord Sycorax's hover craft, which took the front end as he was leader. Romeo, Vladek and Sora all sat behind him. Romeo and Vladek had holo-disguise emitters on their wrists and Sora was carrying a huge, long barrelled sniper rifle that only the best of snipers could wield. The Region finally pulled up at the shores of the country and Lord Sycorax stepped out of his hover craft while the rest of the region remained hovering over the waters of the sea in their craft. Lord Sycorax turned around and addressed the region.

"I know this would have been much better if I had my brilliant battleship my reptilian friends." he said in a grim tone that suggested he was still quite irked by losing his ship the first time he and the region attacked Castle Acorn "But this fleet of hovercraft and walker drones will suffice for it. Now, as you remember the plan, you will all wait here while me and my squad get the party started."

"Yes sir." droned the region.

"You six," Lord Sycorax pointed at a hover craft with six reptiles in it. Two were alligators, one was a Gila Monster, one was a gecko and two were iguanas "You will be the six that accompany me, Vladek, Romeo and Gorton on this mission. Put these on."

He handed the reptiles a holo-disguise emitter each. The six chosen reptiles all put the devices on their wrists and they stepped out of the

hovercraft and joined Lord Sycorax up on dry land. Romeo, Vladek and Sora climbed out after them too. Now Lord Sycorax's squad was prepared, he could get going and begin the first stage of his plan.

"Remember, when I call you, you come onto dry land and drive to Castle Acorn." explained Lord Sycorax "I have my tracking beacon so you know where I am. Standby and await my command."

"Yes sir." said the region with a chorus of salutes to their leader.

Lord Sycorax beamed at himself, pleased to see that installing brain-chips in the whole region's heads had made them fanatically loyal to him and they were working faultlessly. Lord Sycorax turned around and he strode off proudly with his squad following him. The ten reptiles headed off to Mobotropolis where the Acorn Awards were going to take place. The region just remained hovering over the ocean blue near the shores and they waited for Lord Sycorax to give the command. They maybe waiting here for a long, long time but since the brain chips made them loyal to Lord Sycorax, they didn't really think of anything else, not even their boredom so they wouldn't be bored on this wait at all. However, it didn't seem that they would be waiting for long anyway for fifteen minutes after Lord Sycorax and his squad left, Sonic the Hedgehog and Team Chaotix emerged from nowhere and stood before the waiting region. Sally had told the entire R.F.S. what Sora had found out and now Sonic and Team Chaotix were carrying out the first stage of her and Nicole's cunning plan to counter attack. The first stage, as you could probably gather, was Sonic and Team Chaotix take out the reinforcements, leaving Lord Sycorax and his squad outnumbered. The rest would come in later. The Reptile Rebels all did a chorus of gasping at the mere sight of Sonic and Team Chaotix all standing there waiting to smash their vehicles to smithereens.

"Hello there Region of Rebellious Reptiles." said Sonic snidely "You're all uglier then I could dare to imagine. Dr. Eggman's more pleasing to look at then you lot and he's just as grotesque!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! I could say the same about them too Sonic!" laughed Vector the Crocodile, the Chaotix boss "No matter how many times I see them, they still look like contestants for an ugly

contest!"

"So these are the jokers who attacked Castle Acorn while me, Tails and Amy were in Nekronopolis***?" said Sonic in a tone that made it sound like he thought the region was a joke "Well, I've got a letter of complaint to give to them. Sonic style!"

"We have a letter of complaint too." said the Chaotix ninja Espio the Chameleon, brandishing his shuriken weapons "Let's bust these guys up!"

"Whee, this is gonna be so much fun!" cried the Chaotix…um…klutz Charmy Bee "Beating these stupid reptiles up and smashing up their toys! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

With that said, Sonic and Team Chaotix lunged for the fleet of hovercraft and they prepared to unleash hell on the entire region who would only sit there and scream in terror at their attackers…

7pm.

It was time at last. Time for the 2142 Annual Acorn Awards to begin. The Annual Acorn Awards were awards given out to the best and most creditable citizens of the year by the royals of Castle Acorn. They were hosted every year on the last month of the year and this year was going to be the first time Queen Sally Acorn hosted the Annual Acorn Awards after her late parents who were taken from her much too early in her life****. The awards were presented outside of Castle Acorn on a stage that was set up just for the occasion and then taken down the next day. There was a microphone for the presenter and a table with the trophies on. The trophies were golden and they had a bronze acorn on top. The base of the trophies all had a golden plaque that said "Annual Acorn Awards 2142". There were quite a few trophies on the table, suggesting that quite a lot of trophies had to be presented this year (I think you can guess who they're all for!). All the citizens of the old Mobotropolis who had to relocate to Empire City thanks to Eggman destroying their homes had returned home to see the awards once again as they enjoyed seeing the awards whenever they came out.

The Royal Fighters of Mobotropolis were there too sans Sonic as he and Team Chaotix were elsewhere as you already know. Tails the twin-tailed fox, Cosmo the Seedrian, Amy Rose, Cream the Rabbit and her parents Vanilla and Porthos the Rabbit, Wilson the Dog, Mandy Mouse, Geoffrey St. John, Bunnie Rabbot and Ruben the Water Panther were all in the crowd waiting for the ceremony to begin. Wilson and Mandy were familiar with the Acorn Awards as they had seen the last two ceremonies already whereas the rest were new to this but they were looking forward to it.

"Look at all these people here." said Cream as she looked around her "The Acorn Awards must be really exciting if there are so many people here."

"It's not much really Creamy." said Mandy casually "It's just the rulers of Castle Acorn standing on stage giving out fancy speeches you're too young to comprehend and then they give out the awards to people who they think are the best people of the year. I know for definite that our whole team will be winning those awards as we've obviously been the best citizens of the year."

"I don't really mind who wins the awards." said Wilson "It's just nice to see who wins and who doesn't. Although we didn't sign up for the R.F.S. just to win awards, we signed up for the good of the planet and I'm just happy to do my bit to keep the world safe."

"As we all are mate." agreed Geoffrey "Although those trophies would look good in the rest room admittedly. They'd be good display pieces and that's all they will be to us."

"I wonder where Sonic is though." put in Tails as he scanned the crowd of people around him "Shouldn't he be here by now?"

"I think blue dude said he had something to take care of first before he joined us for the awards." wondered Mandy "I wonder what it is he's taking care of though? Can't be too serious if only he is needed for this."

"Don't ya'll worry yer little tails off about sugah-hog." said Bunnie with a reassuring smile on her pretty face "He can take care of himself after all, more so then us even. He'll be back in no time."

"Well he'd better pick up the pace because the ceremony's beginning." muttered Amy grouchily "I was hoping me and him could stand together in the crowd as we await the winners but he just had to go and do something without us. As much as I love Sonic, he can be a bit of an annoyance sometimes can't he?"

Nobody really wanted to answer that. Amy just huffed in annoyance at her friends and she stuck her nose in the air. Unbeknownst to anyone, Romeo, Vladek and the six reptiles in Sycorax's squad had sneaked to the back of the crowd and nabbed eight people to disguise themselves as. They had been wise to choose the back row as it was unlikely for them to be heard by most of the crowd as they were nabbed. The reptiles took the kidnapped citizens behind some buildings of the nearly completed city of New Mobotropolis and they hid the bodies there. The citizens had all been killed by them and the reptiles used their holo-disguise emitters to scan their images and disguise themselves as them. Romeo and Vladek were disguised as a pair of male woodchucks in Hawaiian shirts and sunglasses. Romeo's "shirt" was yellow with green leaves and Vladek's "shirt" was orange with green leaves. The six reptiles with them disguised themselves as a male vole in a red cape and a walking stick, a chipmunk in a pair of gym shorts and a vest top, a ferret in khaki shorts and hiking boots, a pair of wolves in hoodies and baggy trousers and a parrot in blue sneakers and red gloves. Now the reptiles were all in disguise, they joined in the crowd of Mobians that eagerly awaited the Annual Acorn Awards to begin. Romeo immediately began grouching to himself as he looked at his disguise.

"Ugh, I look terrible!" he moaned "A woodchuck is by far the worst thing I could disguise myself as!"

"Well Romeo, you picked it, you wear it." snapped Vladek "Now keep quiet! There are people around and I'm pretty sure you don't want them to hear you moaning to yourself!"

Romeo stopped grouching to himself and he kept quiet. He, Vladek and the squad stood patiently in the crowd waiting for the right moment to strike. They were not to make any move whatsoever until Sally was shot dead by "Gorton" and once that happened, they could ditch their disguises and cause a stir amongst the crowd. As

for Lord Sycorax and Sora, they were in strategic positions that suited the plan perfectly. Sora, still in disguise and holding the rifle ready, was sitting on top of a building that was facing Castle Acorn. Sora would point the rifle straight at Sally's head and then shoot her once she prepared to start the ceremony. Lord Sycorax was down on the ground just below Sora and grinning like a hobgoblin to himself as he watched Sally stepping up onto the stage. Nicole stood behind her. The lady-in-waiting was wearing golden necklaces and diamond rings on her fingers. Her dress was a grand velvet dress coloured navy blue and it had sparkly bits around the hem. Sally Acorn was wearing a fabulous dark purple dress of the finest silk and trimmed with the grandest gold around the hem. Her hair was styled in a nice looking way and she had a tiara on her head. The queen really did look fabulous tonight and Lord Sycorax was looking forward to killing this fabulous looking queen. He began to dribble with excitement (I mean from his mouth before you get the wrong image!) and he had trouble keeping himself from chuckling. Sora just watched him and wondered how on Mobius did Lord Sycorax ever get in and out of anything without getting spotted given how unsubtle he was. Lord Sycorax looked up at Sora, while refraining from skipping on the spot in excitement.

"There comes Sally!" whispered Lord Sycorax happily "Oh my goodness, everything is going like clockwork! Oy! Gorton! Are you ready for the shot yet?"

"I am I tells ya." Sora answered in Gorton's voice "Dis sniper here is primed and ready and I'm getting ready to aim right now."

"Good." cackled Lord Sycorax "Boy am I gonna enjoy seeing Sally's puny little head explode from that shot! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Get ready to fire when I give the command Gorton!"

"Yes boss." said Sora, lifting the rifle up and pointing the barrel straight at Sally's head as she stepped onto the stage and stood before the crowd of Mobians that waited for the awards to begin.

Sora peered through the view scope on the side of the rifle. The target was squarely fixed around Sally's head and once she pulled the trigger, she would get a laser bolt straight through it. Down on the stage, Sally tapped the microphone to see if it was on. The loud

noise that boomed around the place answered her question. The whole crowd stared at Sally in anticipation as she prepared to announce to the crowd. Sally took a deep breath and she spoke into the microphone.

"Attention citizens of Mobotropolis and members of the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters." she announced to the crowd "Welcome one and all to the Annual Acorn Awards of 2142."

The crowd clapped at her. Sally continued speaking into the microphone.

"As you all know, the Annual Acorn Awards are awards presented to citizens of Mobotropolis with the greatest heart, highest honour and utmost care and respect for one and all." she said "And also heroism plays a big part in the awards too. Well this year, there have been many dangerous situations and world shattering events that only our own Royal Fighters had the courage and strength to make it out of alive."

The crowd whooped for the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters. The Mobotropolis Royal Fighters just took the applause modestly and smiled to themselves. Sally smiled at them and she continued.

"We owe these brave individuals our lives and it's thanks to them that Dr. Eggman's threat has been pushed back for the moment." she said "If luck's on our side, we will finally defeat the fat menace and get our freedom back for good…"

Lord Sycorax decided now would be the best time to start the operation. As Sally continued talking, Lord Sycorax looked up at Sora and he yelled at her.

"Gorton, shoot now!" he ordered.

Sora got the message and she kept the rifle fixed squarely on Sally's head. Her finger curled around the trigger and…she turned around, aimed the rifle at Lord Sycorax's arm and shot him. Lord Sycorax yelped in surprise as he was suddenly shot in the arm by Sora and he fell over onto his side. He clutched his throbbing, scorched arm and he yelled in agony. Everybody heard the gunshot and they

began to murmur amongst each other as they wondered what it was. Sally heard the gunshot too and wondered if the region's plan was beginning.

"Everybody, evacuate to the sidelines and do not come back until I say it's safe!" she ordered "Royal Fighters, with me now!"

The startled and worried crowd ran for their lives and they evacuated the site. Tails, Cosmo, Amy, Cream, Wilson, Mandy, Geoffrey, Bunnie and Ruben all stayed where they were and they followed Sally Acorn as she and Nicole ran off the stage and headed to where the gunshot had been heard. They ran all the way over to New Mobotropolis and they came across a very pained Lord Sycorax lying on the ground grimacing in pain and clutching his arm. The disguised reptiles ditched their disguises double-quick and they ran over to their stricken leader. Romeo and Vladek glared up at Sora who leaped down from the building and stood before Lord Sycorax. She threw the rifle down onto the ground and she smirked at him. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and he growled at Sora.

"Gorton you moron! Why did you just shoot me?" roared Lord Sycorax "Do I look like Queen Sally Acorn?"

You'd be a whole lot more pleasant to look at if you did." muttered Geoffrey, priming his arm mounted crossbow and itching to fire it.

"I'm quite capable of telling de difference between you and Sally boss." said Sora slyly "It's just dat…"

She then raised her arm and twisted something on her wrist and switched her disguise off. She was no longer Gorton the Goanna, she was back to being her normal blur-furred foxy self once again. The Mobotropolis Royal Fighters all stared at Sora whereas Sally and Nicole just beamed at her. Lord Sycorax however, looked like someone had just snapped his arm off. The others couldn't believe it either. Gorton was really Sora in disguise? The plan was in turmoil now!

"…I'm really Sora Sumdac, the super spy who tried to get you to redeem yourself and prevent your breakout." said Sora in her normal voice as she rolled her glove back up, covering up the no

longer needed holo-disguise emitter.

"Wha…gah…gop…huh…blop…what?" squeaked Lord Sycorax "You're Gorton? You've been Gorton this whole time? Then where's the real one and what have you done with him you loathsome little brat?"

"Oh don't worry Lord Sycorax, he's fine." said Sora slyly "I only knocked him out and disguised myself as him. He's probably back in his cell in Nekronopolis now. Because of my disguise, I've been able to find out what your plan is and I explained it to Nicole who then explained it to Sally so they knew what you were up to before the plan even began thanks to me the nosy little spy who got the drop on you."

"You've been gypped Lord Sycorax." sneered Sally with an expression that made her look slightly sinister "Thanks to Sora, we know your plan and we've foiled it. Don't bother calling for backup because Sonic and Team Chaotix are seeing to that now."

Lord Sycorax looked like his head was going to explode. As for the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters, they all stared at Sora in amazement, unable to believe that such a young little girl had managed to spy on the region and foil their plans like this.

"Whoa, I have no idea who you are lass but I like you already!" cried Geoffrey.

"That was mighty nice of ya'll to help prevent the Region of Rebellious Reptiles from destroyin' Castle Acorn." congratulated Bunnie "Well done sugah!"

"Thank you everybody." said Sora "When I get back to headquarters I'll give my bosses your thanks."

As for Tails, for some odd reason, he was staring very hard at Sora. His stare made it look like he was familiar with Sora in someway or another. Sora saw Tails looking at her and she stared back at him. Just seeing Tails made Sora stare at her as if something in her head went click. Was it a memory? Or was it something out of the norm that was making them look at each other.

"Hello." said Tails politely "Do I know you? You look vaguely familiar for some reason."

"I…I…" stammered Sora "I don't know what…"

Their little moment was interrupted by Lord Sycorax lunging at Sora and pinning the super spy to the ground. Sora screamed in terror and she tried to push the giant crocodile off of herself.

"YOU WRETCHED CHILD! I'LL RIP YOUR HEART OUT FOR THIS!" thundered Lord Sycorax "NOBODY SPIES ON ME AND FOILS MY PLANS WHILE I'M AROUND!"

He tried to throttle Sora but the fox began squirming furiously underneath him, making it hard to grab hold of her. Bunnie was quick to react by punching Lord Sycorax off of Sora with her robot arm and send him hurling into a building. Luckily, the building withstood the impact and Lord Sycorax lay at the foot of the building, groaning to himself.

"Ya'll leave poor Sora alone gruesome!" cried Bunnie, pointing sharply at him.

Lord Sycorax just sneered at the Rabbot and he picked himself up. Bunnie bent down in a battle ready stance and prepared to fight.

"I remember you." purred Lord Sycorax "I wiped the floor with you on the nose of my ship the first time I tried to destroy Castle Acorn. Well, I'll wipe the floor with you again cyborg!"

"I wouldn't get too hopeful on that Sycorax." crowed Sora "I sabotaged your strength-enhancing arm gauntlets so you're just plain old Lord Sycorax now and not super-strong Lord Sycorax."

Lord Sycorax stared at his arm gauntlets and he made a face of epic shock and anger both at the same time. Sora had sabotaged his arm gauntlets? Then that meant he would only be at his normal strength now and he would have a harder time defeating his enemies then normal. Regardless, someone as stubborn and egotistical as Lord Sycorax was not going to give up so easily. He looked up from his gauntlets and he clenched his teeth.

"So what if you've sabotaged them?" snarled Sycorax "I'll just crush you all the same!"

"Sycorax, you're finished here!" yelled Ruben, pointing sharply at him "Your plan's been foiled, your reinforcements are likely battered and beaten if Sonic and Team Chaotix are dealing with them now and you're out numbered! Get out of here and go home unless you want this to end with senseless violence!"

Lord Sycorax's response was, eerily enough, a big, wide, dark smile on his long scaly jaws. This did not look good to any of the Royal Fighters at all. If a villain's smiling at you despite the fact he's obviously been beaten then that meant something sinister was abroad.

"Why…is he smiling at us?" asked Amy nervously.

"Do I look like the kind of croc who DOESN'T have a back up plan?" sneered Lord Sycorax, folding his arms and looking smug at the Royal Fighters.

Sora's heart seized up for a minute and her tail straightened in shock. Back up plan? Lord Sycorax had a back up plan? How did she not know this? She spied on Lord Sycorax! How did she fail to find out the croc had a back up plan?

"S-S-Sora? Please tell me you know about this!" shrieked Sally.

"I…I don't your majesty." said Sora grimly "Lord Sycorax only told the region the plan, he never spoke of having a back up plan!"

"That's what I do morons, I never speak my back up plans to anyone unless they're involved in it." crooned Lord Sycorax "Reptile Air Force A-113! Prepare for launch and fly to my coordinates!"

As he yelled that though, Sora sighed with relief all of the sudden.

"Oh phew, and here's me thinking we had something to worry about!" she said with relief.

"We DO have something to worry about you crazy fox!" snapped Amy "There's an air force coming and it's gonna blow us to

smithereens!"

"No it won't." said Sora coyly "I found a box of detonators in the weapons vault and I set them all to go off a couple of hours after the region left. The base should be in smithereens by now."

"That's where you're wrong spy!" crowed Lord Sycorax "The weapons vault doubles as a bomb shelter in emergencies so a box of detonators will not destroy the base if it's still in the weapons vault! At the most, you've probably just destroyed the weapons supply inside if that's what you've done."

The look on Sora's face was legendary. Someone could photograph that face and it would go down in history as one of the most legendary shocked expressions ever.

"NO!" screamed Sora "This can't be! I've been on two spying missions this week and I screw up on both of them! I failed to realize that Romeo and Vladek were gonna change their plan after I found theirs out and now I don't pay attention to detail and mess up on destroying the region's base! What kind of spy am I?"

"Sora dear, don't take it so hard on yourself." said Nicole softly "We've stopped the first plan so we'll stop the back up plan too."

"Oh really you flaccid minded canailles?" sneered Lord Sycorax "And who's gonna be able to stop that then?"

Just as he said that though, a whooshing sound was heard from the nearby forests of Green Hill Zone and it was coming towards New Mobotropolis. It was Sonic the Hedgehog. He and the Chaotix had just finished making a mess of the Region of Rebellious Reptile's fleet and now they were coming to finish off Lord Sycorax and his cronies. Vector the Crocodile lumbered after Sonic and the moment he caught sight of Lord Sycorax, he jumped high into the air like a leaping antelope and he drew his arm back. Lord Sycorax was so shocked at this he didn't have time to react. Vector landed in front of him and socked him directly in the face and then gave him a massive uppercut that sent him hurling through the air and crashing down a good few feet away. Vector didn't stop there though, he lumbered off towards Lord Sycorax.

"You guys fight who you want, Sycorax is mine!" yelled Vector as he ran over to the region leader.

"Huh, he seems to have a thing against Lord Sycorax doesn't he?" noted Sonic as he watched Vector prepared to beat the living daylights out of Lord Sycorax.

"They're related." said Charmy casually "Evil dad and good son kind of thing actually."

"Charmy! Vector doesn't want anyone to know about his past!" snapped Espio.

"Sorry." said Charmy quickly.

"Sycorax and Vector are father and son?" mused Sonic "I never would have guessed. Oh well, he's dad's evil and he has an evil group of reptiles so let's stomp on them!"

"Sonic, Sycorax has called in an air force!" exclaimed Sally frantically "Any minute now, some region jets are gonna come in and possibly destroy the castle! We need you to take care of them!"

"Queenie, say no more, the hedgehog is on it." said Sonic "Tails, you fly me up into the sky and we'll wait for this air force to show up. When it comes, I'll spin-dash the jets to pieces."

"No problem Sonic." said Tails, twisting his tails around one another and taking flight.

Tails grabbed Sonic by the hands and he carried the blue hedgehog off the ground. Romeo was quick to react and he grabbed the sniper rifle Sora had been given for the plan while she was Gorton. He aimed the sniper at Sonic and prepared to shoot him dead but Amy stepped in and walloped him away with her hammer.

"Don't you dare shoot my Sonic!" she screeched.

Romeo crashed headfirst into the ground and he groaned in pain. So nobody could use the sniper, Amy raised her Piko-Piko hammer and she smashed the rifle to pieces with one hefty swing. Romeo glowered at Amy and he lunged at her with his claws bared but

Espio leaped in and kicked him away with a ninja style kick. Romeo landed painfully on his side and he grimaced in pain. The red chameleon picked himself up and he and Espio engaged in battle. Vladek and the other six reptiles in Sycorax's squad all decided to join in the battle and the Royal Fighters and Reptiles ended up engaging in battle with one another. Even Sally and Nicole joined in as they were pretty sick of the region and their anarchistic ways. Vladek and Mandy were the first to fight each other as the two remembered their first fight too well and they had grudges to settle. Mandy slipped on her brass knuckle attachments and she gave Vladek a left and right hook each to the face. Vladek raised his frill and he snarled angrily at the purple mouse. Mandy just promptly punched him on the nose and pushed him towards Wilson. Vladek smacked Wilson in the head but Wilson was quick to react by elbowing him in the ribs and then slashing him on the frill with his trademark spinning blade weapon. Vladek roared in anger and he tail-whipped Wilson in the legs and tripped him up. He then prepared to bite Wilson but Mandy punched him in the jaw and her knuckle attachments made the punch all the more painful. Vladek clutched his jaw only to get knocked off his feet by a kick from Wilson. As for Romeo, Espio wasn't the only one fighting him. Amy had decided to join the ninja chameleon in his fight. Romeo gave Espio an uppercut that made him stagger and he slugged Amy in the gut but Espio struck back with a ninja chop to the head and a roundhouse kick to the legs. Amy raised her Piko-Piko hammer up high and she walloped Romeo with it. Romeo hurled through the air and he crashed down onto Vladek, earning a thumbs up from Wilson and Mandy each over to Amy and Espio. As for the other six reptiles, Geoffrey was engaged with an alligator with brown scales, Ruben was battling an alligator with green scales, Sally and Nicole teamed up against the Gila Monster, Charmy toyed around with the gecko and Bunnie, Cream and Cosmo teamed up against the two iguanas. Geoffrey and the alligator seemed even sided so far, just throwing attacks at each other and then blocking each other's moves while launching attacks of their own. The alligator was strong and brawny but Geoffrey had much better skills then the alligator was so the alligator was having problems gaining an edge on the skunk. Geoffrey then decided to use his crossbow on the alligator in order to stop it. Geoffrey shot the alligator with a stun dart and the alligator was knocked out in an instant. As for the green alligator, he was no

match for Ruben's water powers and novice level kung fu. Ruben leaped up to the alligator's height and he rapidly kicked the alligator in the face, knocking him onto his back. Ruben didn't stop there though, he grabbed the alligator's tail and he slammed him over onto his stomach. He then threw the alligator through the air and sent him crashing onto the ground a few feet away from him. Sally and Nicole may not be Royal Fighters but they were pretty good in combat due to the training they took in their spare time so they could fight as well as the others. The Gila Monster was almost the same size as Diesel and he was equally as brutish but Sally and Nicole's agility and speed were too much for him. Sally and Nicole double-teamed the Gila Monster with a pair of kicks each and they brought the huge reptile down onto his knees. Charmy and the gecko seemed to be more playing a game of tag then fighting each other as the gecko kept trying to lunge at Charmy but the ditzy bee would dodge his attacks and then knock him down onto the ground and laugh at him while playfully crying "tag you're it!" much to the gecko's annoyance. The gecko tried to leap on Charmy but Charmy dodged his leap and he kicked him down onto the ground again, laughing childishly at him. As for Bunnie, Cream and Cosmo, they seemed to have their fight in the bag. Cream and Cosmo were more the distractions then anything, running around the iguanas and either hitting them or tripping them up. Bunnie then used her robot parts to beat the iguanas into submission. A hefty punch to both of them was all she needed to do and they were knocked out cold. Bunnie smirked at the knocked out iguanas and she flexed her robot arm.

"Those silly reptiles are no match for us." she gloated "Now those guys are finished, ah think ah'll help sugah-hog foil that air force that's coming over here to bomb us to bits."

With that said, Bunnie took to the skies with the jets in her roboticized feet and she joined up with Sonic and Tails, who were still waiting for the air force to arrive. Back on the ground, Vector and Lord Sycorax were in heated competition with each other. They threw powerful punches at each other and they hit each other as hard as they could. Lord Sycorax's punches weren't as powerful as they could be because Sora sabotaged his strength enhancing gauntlets but he was still strong. Lord Sycorax punched Vector in

the jaws and then gave him an uppercut that almost took his head off. Vector shook the attacks off and he slugged Lord Sycorax in the gut. Lord Sycorax doubled over and wheezed heavily. Vector then clasped his fists together and slammed Lord Sycorax's head with them. Lord Sycorax was thrown onto his knees and he yelled in pain. Vector grabbed Lord Sycorax around the torso and he tried to pick him up but Lord Sycorax snapped his jaws at him, making him back off quickly and Lord Sycorax leaped back onto his feet. He roundhouse punched Vector in the snout and then he kicked his son in the gut. Vector retaliated by grabbing Lord Sycorax by the jaws and throwing him across the ground as hard as he could.

"Why don't you give up Lord Sycorax?" growled Vector "Your back-up's swimming back to base, your plan's been foiled by a spy and your squad isn't enough to beat us all!"

"That maybe so but my air-force will wipe you all out when it arrives!" yelled Lord Sycorax, snapping his jaws at Vector "Those Region Jets have firepower that can level a city so Castle Acorn will be destroyed regardless of what happens now!"

Vector just charged at Lord Sycorax and rammed him with his shoulder. Lord Sycorax growled and he pounced on Vector like a pouncing tiger. Meanwhile, up in the skies, the region air force had arrived at long last. The air force consisted of fighter jets shaped like Eurofighter Typhoons with reptilian scale paint decos. The wings had reptilian eyes painted on them and teeth painted on the nose cone. Sonic, Tails and Bunnie saw the oncoming jets and they flew towards them. The jets were still over Green Hill Zone at the moment and they had to be stopped before they reached New Mobotropolis or a lot of damage was going to be caused when they were shot down.

"Here comes the air force!" cried Tails.

"We've only got one shot at this so we're gonna have to make it count." said Sonic "Tails, on the count of three, throw me at the jets and I'll spin-dash as many as I can. Bunnie, you cause as much damage as you can and catch me when I run out."

"No problem sugah-hog." said Bunnie brightly.

"Ready Tails?" asked Sonic as the Mobians flew over Green Hill Zone.

"Ready." said Tails, preparing to throw Sonic at the oncoming jets.

"One…two…three!" yelled Sonic.

Tails threw Sonic as hard as he could at the roaring jets that flew over the forests of Green Hill Zone and Sonic curled up into a spin-dash. Sonic spin-dashed the first jet and he ploughed straight through the hull of the jet. The stricken jet was brought down in an instant and it dived down into the ground below. Upon hitting the ground, it exploded into flames. Sonic's spin-dash didn't stop there though. He continued to spin-dash some other jets, bringing them down as he ploughed through them and destroyed them with one powerful spin-dash. Bunnie contributed to this beautifully by deploying her arm cannon and blasting the jets in the wings and jet turbines at the back. The jets were brought down by her attacks and they crashed into the ground, exploding into flames as they crashed. This whole fiasco continued until the entire air force was brought down and reduced to flames and debris on the ground. Sonic's spin-dash ran out and Bunnie Rabbot caught him by the arm before he could fall down to the ground. Now the air force was brought down, Bunnie and Tails flew down to the ground with Sonic in tow. Down on the ground, Sycorax's squadron had been beaten and Lord Sycorax was only just holding out against Vector. Sonic ran over to Lord Sycorax at supersonic speed and he spin-dashed Sycorax directly in the back. Lord Sycorax yelped as he was sent hurling across the ground and crashing into Castle Acorn. Lord Sycorax's helmet protected him from most of the impact but the attack still hurt him. Lord Sycorax picked himself up and he grumbled in annoyance to himself. Sonic stood before him and he pointed to Lord Sycorax.

"Hey, Syco boy!" he yelled at him "Pack up your bags and get outta here! You're finished now! Me and Bunnie have just destroyed your air fleet and your squadron's looking worse for wear right now!"

Lord Sycorax observed the scenery around him and he noticed his defeated squadron and shot down air force. His plans were in absolute and complete turmoil now. His reinforcements had been sent packing by Sonic and Team Chaotix, his air force had been

stricken down by Sonic and Bunnie and his squad was not enough to defeat these heroes. The Region of Rebellious Reptiles had been beaten and now was a good time to retreat, regardless of how much he was hoping to destroy the castle.

"Don't get comfortable you heroic heathens!" bellowed Lord Sycorax "I'll be back and Castle Acorn will no longer be on the map the next time we face each other! And that is a promise! Region! Retreat!"

The battered and beaten reptiles picked themselves up and limped away from the castle grounds. Lord Sycorax quickly jogged after them. Sonic and friends watched until the reptiles had gone and they spoke to each other.

"I can easily see how you lot stopped those jokers while I was away." said Sonic "They're so pathetic, you don't need me to stomp on them."

"You got that right mate." said Geoffrey "Sora just made our victory this time round all the more easy though."

"Speaking of Sora, where is she?" asked Tails "I've got something to ask her."

The Royal Fighters looked around for the blue furred fox in the utility belt but Sora was nowhere in sight. After the Region got defeated, Sora legged it as she was no longer needed around here.

"She's gone." said Cosmo "I was hoping to give her my thanks for helping us defeat those reptiles but she's gone now. What did you wanna ask her Tails?"

"I wanted to ask her why is it I feel so familiar with her." said Tails "When I looked at her, something clicked in my head, something that suggests I know Sora somehow…but I don't know why that is though. I don't have any other memories of Sora other then her name and appearance, vaguely that is."

"Maybe you do know Sora." said Cosmo "Next time we meet, maybe we can see why you feel so familiar with her."

"Hopefully." said Tails "Otherwise I'm gonna drive myself mad

thinking about her and why I feel like I've seen her before."

"It is a pity Sora's gone back to her headquarters." said Sally "I was hoping to give her an Acorn Award for her contribution to Mobotropolis' safety. Maybe next time though. Now the region is defeated, shall we continue with the Acorn Awards?"

"Be my guest Sally." said Sonic "The show must go on as they say."

With that said, the royals and fighters saw to cleaning up the wreckage of the region air force and getting the ceremony back on track…

As for little Sora, the super spy had gone back to her headquarters and she was sitting in her bedroom pondering to herself on one thing. Why Tails seemed familiar with her. True she was happy that everything had gone right in the end despite her slight mess-ups and the Region of Rebellious Reptiles had been defeated but she couldn't for the life of her think why Tails seemed familiar with her. In fact, she felt familiar with Tails too but she couldn't quite understand why.

"Tails…" she mused to herself "That name really sounds familiar to me. And so does he to some degree. But why? And why is he familiar to me? I think I have some idea though…"

She hopped off her bed and opened a drawer. She reached into the drawer and grabbed a box marked with the words "Family Possessions". She opened the box and she looked through it. The box contained some of her possessions from childhood and one possession she was looking for was a family photograph buried at the bottom of the box. She peered at the photo and saw who was in it. There was herself as a four year old, her parents, a male fox in general attire and a female fox in a purple dress and yellow pearls and in the mother fox's arms was…a baby twin-tailed fox that greatly resembled Tails, only younger looking. A memory crept into Sora's head and her mind went click. She knew why she and Tails felt familiar with one another.

"Of course!" she cried to herself in realization "Tails…is my brother…!"

Footnotes:

***Yes, Lord Sycorax will never forget about Arc 7 will he?**

**** We can never forget *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 2 can we?**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 70**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 21**

Phbbbbttt! WHAT? Sora and Tails are...SIBLINGS? WHOA! I didn't see that coming! Did you? Oh well, the Region's defeated and everything's back to normal. But it won't stay like that trust me...! Join me next time when none other then Ruben the Water Panther gets his own arc! Reviews are welcome.

Meanwhile, tune back into Heroes of Mobius as Sonic and Amy get a very chilling mission in "Cold Chills"!

P.S. Project 1-21-18-9-1-19, what are you top five favourite Tales from Mobius arcs? Just interested that's all. :)

The Water Panther Plunder 1

Arc 12: The Water Panther Plunder

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 95-97

Part 1: Return to Chun-Nan

"Ruben old buddy, there you are!" cried the voice of none other then Sonic the Hedgehog, the Fastest Thing Alive and worldwide hero as he poked his head into the rest room of Royal HQ "I've been looking all over for ya!"

New Mobotropolis had finally been completed after months and months of construction and now the new city, which was meant to replace the Old Mobotropolis after Dr. Eggman destroyed it*, was having it's grand opening ceremony. This news was delightful for not only Sonic as he used to live in Mobotropolis before Eggman invaded, but for everybody else who lived in Mobotropolis including two of his friends Wilson the Dog and Mandy Mouse. All of Sonic's friends were attending this ceremony and all the people who used to live in Mobotropolis had come to see their new home now it had been finished. One of Sonic's friends hadn't shown up yet and that was the water-throwing former Chun-Nan resident Ruben the Water Panther. Sonic had been wondering where Ruben was so he went back into Royal HQ and he found the water panther in the rest room holding a warp ring in his hand. Ruben looked surprised that Sonic had just found him and Sonic was surprised to see Ruben holding a warp ring in his hand.

"What's keeping ya Ruben?" asked Sonic "The grand opening of New Mobotropolis is minutes away. I thought we were all seeing this together."

"Nothing's keeping me Sonic." said Ruben, fiddling about with the warp ring he had in his hand "I'm preparing to go back home to Chun-Nan that's what."

"You're going back to Chun-Nan?" asked Sonic "Why? I thought you loved it here with us."

"I do." said Ruben "I'm only going back for a day, I'm not going back to Chun-Nan permanently. I'd been meaning to visit Chun-Nan again for a while and I thought right now would be a good time so I asked Knuckles if I could borrow a warp ring from Angel Island. He had one spare so he gave it to me after arriving here to see the grand opening ceremony."

"I see." said Sonic "So you're gonna miss the opening of New Mobotropolis to go back home for a visit huh?"

"Yes." said Ruben "Don't take that the wrong way Sonic, it's not that I'm not interested in seeing New Mobotropolis, it's that I'm more interested in visiting my home country again."

"I respect that Ruben." said Sonic casually "After all, Chun-Nan means more to you then New Mobotropolis does. You take care of yourself while you're in Chun-Nan or I'm coming after ya Ruben."

"I'll be just fine Sonic." said Ruben reassuringly "I know the dangers and I know who to call for help should I need any."

"Alright then." said Sonic "Hey, if you see Princess Matilda while you're home, tell her that Sonic's wondering how she's doing right now." he added with a sly wink of the eye.

"I'll remember." said Ruben, flicking the warp ring into the air "Goodbye Sonic, I'll be back as soon as possible."

The warp ring spun around a couple of times and then it expanded to twice its size, just the right height for Ruben to go through and warp from here to Chun-Nan. Ruben waved Sonic goodbye and then he stepped through the warp ring, leaving New Mobotropolis behind and warping off to Chun-Nan. The warp ring closed behind him and vanished into thin air, leaving no trace of its existence as it vanished. Sonic left the rest room and wondered on out of Royal HQ to join the others for the grand opening ceremony of New Mobotropolis. As he headed over to the newly constructed city, he thought to himself.

Be safe Ruben. And be back soon little guy.

But as this ceremony prepared to commence, Sonic would end up thinking it was good that Ruben left when he could as a certain ice wizard was planning to take Castle Acorn for herself and nobody would see her coming or expect her arrival…

Princess Matilda, the beauty and grace of Chun-Nan and secret kung-fu warrior (although given past events**, she's not such a secret kung-fu warrior anymore) was having a training session in a dark, underground room with her vigilante kung-fu master. He was a robed figure in a dragon mask named Kai Zen and he was at the expert stage of kung-fu. He had been teaching many students throughout his long life time but none had excelled grater then Matilda. The mongoose had literally been his best student ever and he always enjoyed her training sessions whenever she came to continue her training. Kai's mysterious appearance was mostly due to the fact he was a vigilante kung-fu master. He lived underground in dark rooms and since he wore robes and a mask, no one would ever know who he really was under those robes and mask and if anyone tried to track him down, they'd have no idea who they're looking for as anybody could wore robes and a mask. As a matter of fact, all vigilante kung-fu masters dressed like this so Kai was going to be a hard kung-fu master to track down should anyone be looking for him. In order to keep his secrecy, he had forbidden Matilda from mentioning his name to anybody so he was going to be even harder to track down. Despite his secrecy, when he was in battle, he was a force to be reckoned with, a force even grater then fate itself. He was at the expert stage of kung-fu and he was hoping to mould Matilda into his image and so far, he had been successful. Matilda's loyalty to her father, Emperor Tai, and determination to keep Chun-Nan safe had helped the young princess along the way and now, Matilda was almost there. One of the lessons she had to learn in order to reach the expert stage of kung-fu was inner peace, one of the most important lessons in all of martial arts. Matilda and Kai were both sitting in meditating positions and facing each other. A candlestick with a lit candle sat between them and the flame flickered as the wax candle began to melt under its heat. The candle

represented Matilda's nerves and anxieties. If Matilda was relaxed, the flame would remain still but if she was unsettled, the flame would wobble and the more unsettled she became, the more the flame would wobble and if it was wobbling too much, Kai would blow the flame out and stop the session. Right now, things seemed to be going well. Matilda hummed to herself as she focused on the quietness of the room and the warmth of the burning candle before her. She had her eyes closed and her hands out to the side. Kai was doing the same as she was and he kept an eye on the candle that burnt before them.

"Focus Matilda, focus on nothing but the warmth of the candle and the quietness of the room." Kai said gruffly.

His voice was old and raspy sounding and it made him sound very similar to the late Chinese actor Mako. Matilda seemed to be taking in Kai's instructions and she seemed very relaxed right now. The candle was still burning but the flame was not moving at all. If Matilda could keep this up until the candle burnt out then she would be on her way to mastering inner peace. Unfortunately, Matilda began to see something. Martial artists had this ability of being visionary and Matilda was getting a vision right now. A very unsettling one and it was making her lose focus on the task. The candle began to wobble slightly and Matilda began muttering under her breath. Kai noticed this and he narrowed his eyes at the kung-fu princess.

"Matilda dear, focus." he said "You're beginning to get unsettled. Relax yourself."

"No…this…this can't…can't be…" muttered Matilda "No…no…no!"

Matilda was beginning to get more and more unsettled by the second and Kai could sense it. The flame of the candle began shuddering furiously and Matilda was beginning to mutter to herself louder and louder. The vision she was getting was nightmarish and it wasn't going to end well.

"You…you can't…you can't do this…no…please…no!" cried Matilda.

The flame wobbled so furiously it almost went out. Kai could sense

Matilda was in a bad state right now so he swiped at the candle and put the flame out while yelling something in Chinese. The candle went out and the room fell into total darkness again. Matilda snapped out of her vision and gasped loudly, only to realize the room was completely dark now. Kai relit the candle and he set it aside himself and Matilda so they would have some light in the room. Matilda began to breath heavily and she placed a hand over her chest, feeling her pounding heart. The vision had been terrible and Kai could see that Matilda was very unsettled by it.

"Dear child, your heart is pounding like a drum." croaked Kai "What is the matter? You were doing so well a moment ago."

"Oh Master, I'm so dreadfully sorry about all this." said Matilda glumly "I'm trying, I really am trying to complete this lesson. But…I had a terrible, terrible vision while I was meditating."

Kai put a finger to his lips and thought to himself.

"It's unusual for one to receive nightmarish visions during meditating." he mused "You seem to find it hard to settle your mind child. Settling the body is the easy part but the mind is the hardest to settle. If your mind was settled, then you wouldn't be having visions of any kind."

"Yes Master, I'm sorry Master." said Matilda, bowing to Kai "Please don't get too mad at me."

"I don't get mad child, I just firmly give reminders." said Kai gently "Getting mad never worked for any kung-fu master and getting mad with the student assures a chance of them growing up the wrong way. Now Matilda, what was your vision?" he asked.

"Oh it was terrible!" cried Matilda, putting her hands to her face in dismay "Terrible, terrible, terrible! I saw myself running through the ravaged villages of Chun-Nan and trying to catch some unknown assailant but then I get tackled by the assailant's troops and then… nothing. Just…just darkness. Oh Master, what does this mean?" she wailed.

"Visions may symbolize something that could possibly happen in the

future child." said Kari softly "But they seldom symbolize something that WILL happen. Few visions ever come true so don't take your visions too seriously. Anyway, your vision suggests that something terrible may happen. Something that may or may not claim your life."

Matilda looked horrified to hear something like this. The vision she'd received might be a foretelling of her death? She couldn't die yet! She was only twenty-one and she hadn't even had a time on the throne of Chun-Nan yet! This vision couldn't possibly be true!

"Something that may or may not claim my life?" repeated Matilda "I really hope this vision doesn't come true. I'm too young to die."

"Matilda, remember that visions seldom come true." said Kai sternly "Don't take your vision too seriously. In the most likeliest scenario, it'll only be a nightmare you've just had at random so don't worry about it."

"I won't master." said Matilda "I promise."

"There's a good girl Matilda." said Kai "Now my child, shall we try again or do you wish to move onto another lesson?"

"I think I'll move onto the next lesson." said Matilda "I'm not really in for inner peace right now."

"Very well princess, let us move onto the next lesson." said Kai, standing up and picking the candle up.

He led Matilda out of the room and into another one to start another lesson of her training. As Matilda followed her master to the next room, she began to ponder on her vision. Was it a warning about events that were yet to come? Or was it just a nightmare trying to distract her? Whatever it was, Matilda couldn't let it bother her or she would never be able to complete her training if she continued to get distracted by it…

In the middle of the local Chun-Nan village, a warp ring opened up from nowhere and Ruben stepped out of the great teleportation device and into the village. After Ruben stepped out of the ring, the

warp ring shrunk down to size and fell to the floor with a ping. Ruben grabbed the ring and he put the ring in his glove for safe keeping. It would have been better if he'd brought a satchel or something to keep it in but he hadn't so he had to keep it in his glove. Ruben surveyed his surroundings and was pleased to see that the warp ring had taken him exactly where he wanted to go, the village of Chun-Nan. He'd been away from his home for so long and yet it all still looked familiar to him. Even though Chun-Nan brought Ruben sad memories about his clan's slaughter and his mother's death, he couldn't let those sad memories keep him from going back to Chun-Nan every once in a while, it wouldn't be very honourable to his mother or clan. As for the village, it was still looking as happy and wonderful as it always was. People were shopping around the market and people in the market were selling pots, pans, dishes, drinks and clothes of all kinds. It brought Ruben great joy to see this wonderful village once again. Ruben breathed in deeply and got a whiff of noodles and stir fry from a shop nearby. That, in his opinion, was the sweet smell of Chun-Nan.

"Aaaah, Chun-Nan." said Ruben happily "How I miss this place when I'm away from it. I really shouldn't have left the country just to escape my sorrows after Zira killed my clan. Oh well, at least I've made up for it by becoming a Royal Fighter and joining Sonic in his quest to destroy Dr. Eggman and bring peace back to Mobius. That, is the highest honour any can achieve, teaming up with the world famous Sonic the Hedgehog and fighting alongside him for the good of Mobius. I bet mother would be so proud of me if she saw me now."

He paused for a moment and shed a small tear as he thought about the day Zira slaughtered his clan. It pained him to think about it but he couldn't forget about it as it was a truly horrible day that would forever haunt him until the day he died.

"Oh well, at least there are other water panthers." Ruben said to himself "Particularly the second water panther clan, the Zhangcháo*** clan. Thank goodness they weren't ninjas at the time otherwise Zira might have slaughtered them too. Speaking of the Zhangcháo clan, maybe I should go and see them. See how they're doing now. Especially my good friend Hydra. I'd love to see that

lovable joker again."

With that said, Ruben strode off through the village and set courses for the Zhangcháo clan. Ruben knew exactly where they lived so he'd find the clan in an instant. The Zhangcháo clan were located near the Lake of Holy Waters, the largest lake in Chun-Nan and the lake was on the other side of the bamboo forests near the Pagoda of Prosperity. As Ruben passed through the village, he listened to the happy sound of the market place teaming with marketers hoping to sell their products. Some marketers tried to get Ruben to buy something from them.

"Hey, water panther!" cried a pottery seller who was a goose in a Chinese robe and hat "Check out my finest pot collection! These beautiful pieces of pottery were made by my own artistic hands and you can see how my lovely work has paid off by seeing my great collection of pots and vases!"

Ruben looked at the collection of pots he had on sale and stared at them in admiration. Those pots were simply gorgeous. They were beautifully sculpted and carved and they had beautiful decos and colours on them. Ruben always did love Chun-Nan pottery but he didn't have any money with him right now so he couldn't buy anything.

"Sorry, I have no money." said Ruben "Thanks for the offer anyway."

He left the pottery stall and carried on through the village. He passed several other stalls, looking at them to see what was on sale and just carrying on by as he couldn't buy anything. Then suddenly, as Ruben was heading towards the end of the market, he spotted someone at a robes stall. This person was someone he knew too. The person at the stall was a water panther like he was only he had darker blue fur, green gloves and boots instead of purple, a tail with three points instead of two and he wore a forest green vest with gold trimmings around the edges. The water panther also had green eyes and had green markings on his head and arms and tail. The water panther was also older then Ruben was, about five years older then him. Ruben knew this water panther and he was eager to meet him at once. Ruben ran over to the water panther just as he was putting a robe back on the stall. The shop owner, a female goat, didn't seem

pleased he wasn't buying anything from her.

"Nah missy, this robe doesn't really blend in well with my fur colour." said the water panther "Too vibrant and garish really. Oh well, it was worth a look anyway, see ya."

But before the water panther could walk away, Ruben stopped in front of him and began bouncing about in excitement.

"Hydra!" cried Ruben "Hi Hydra! Oh boy it's so good to see you again!"

Hydra looked down at Ruben and his face brightened at the sight of someone familiar to him.

"Well bang the gongs!" cried Hydra happily "Ruben! It's been a while since I've last seen your little baby face around here hasn't it?"

He picked Ruben up and playfully gave him a noogie-noogie on his head, laughing playfully as he noogied him. Ruben laughed and he squirmed in Hydra's grasp.

"Hey! Lemme go you big oaf!" giggled Ruben "And haven't we had a little talk about not calling me baby face Hydra?"

"Ah whatever, you know I'm just a little jester at heart don't ya buddy?" chuckled Hydra, putting Ruben down and letting him go "So what brings you back to holy grounds then? Rumour says after Zira the Ruthless killed your clan, you upped and left didn't you?"

"I did." said Ruben "But I've decided to come back for a little visit. I find myself missing Chun-Nan from time to time and it's been a while since I've last seen this place so I though I just had to visit it again."

"I see." said Hydra "So how's post clan life been doing for ya? Good? Bad? Or is it none of my business?"

"No, you're quite alright to hear it." said Ruben "After I ran away from Chun-Nan, I got captured by two slave masters and…well, my back explains it all."

He turned around and showed Hydra his back. He still had that long

pink scar on his back he'd received from Marcus and Celia Punch's constant whipping when he was one of their slaves. Hydra stared at the scar and his eyes widened in horror.

"Great roaring dragons!" he exclaimed "What did those slave masters do to you? Slash you with a flippin' katana?"

"No, they whipped me." said Ruben, turning back around "And my mind still heaves thinking about it. Thank goodness Marcus and Celia are dead**** so they can't treat anybody else badly and I don't have to worry about them anymore."

"I'm in with you on that one Rubes." said Hydra supportively "Nobody whips one of my little buddies and lives to tell the tale on my watch! Pity someone else killed them as I'd be happy to do the honours."

"Hydra, you and I both know killing is not the honouree way and the only time killing's necessary is if it's a last resort." said Ruben sternly.

"Yeah, sure, whatever." muttered Hydra "So what happened after you became a slave for those two slave masters you refer to as Marcus and Celia Punch then?"

"I managed to escape and I ran into Tails, Sonic's twin-tailed fox friend." explained Ruben "He and his girlfriend Cosmo helped me to save all the other slaves and then we helped save Sonic the Hedgehog from Dr. Eggman. After that, I joined the Royal Fighters Service and now I fight alongside the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters."

"Some guys have all the luck don't they?" said Hydra teasingly "Poor little Ruben leaves because his clan got killed and then he ends up fighting alongside the world famous Sonic the Hedgehog? That alone is one of the most honouree things anyone can do! I'd love to meet that guy, he sounds ace! What's Sonic like? A good guy to hang around with?"

"He's a little impetuous and arrogant for my liking but he's a good person." said Ruben "Very honouree too. He had a duel of honour with a Raiju ninja***** and when the leader asked Sonic to kill the

ninja, he spared his life instead as he believes everybody deserves a second chance. It's an absolute honour fighting alongside someone with courage and heart like Sonic."

"He sounds even cooler then I thought he was!" exclaimed Hydra "You know what, you oughta bring me over to Mobotropolis to meet Sonic someday. I think me and him would get along just fine."

"I know you two will." laughed Ruben "You and Sonic are both jokers at heart and have a good sense of humour. Enough of that now, may I meet your clan Hydra?" he asked "I've been meaning to see you and the Zhangcháo clan again while I'm here."

"You sure can Ruben." said Hydra brightly "Anyone from the Hailàng clan's welcome in our territory. Let's go then."

With that said, the two water panthers left the village behind and headed off to the Lake of the Holy Waters, home of the Zhangcháo clan. Ruben couldn't wait to meet the clan again, especially as he was good friends with the clan growing up so it would be good to see those water panthers again…

A short trek later, Ruben and Hydra arrived at the Lake of Holy Waters, the home place of the Zhangcháo clan. The Lake of Holy Waters truly was a beauty to anyone who saw it. It was so clear and clean that you'd think it was under some kind of magical spell. The lake was officially noted in the record books as being the clearest, cleanest and most beautiful lake in all of Mobius so you can pretty much see why the Zhangcháo clan took refuge here. As for the clan itself, the Zhangcháo clan did not know martial arts of any kind. Not every clan in Chun-Nan knew martial arts. The Zhangcháo clan were more of a Greenpeace kind of group, keeping the environment clean and making sure Chun-Nan remains a beautiful country once again. The only skills they had really were their water powers and that was their ONLY defence, they didn't know any marital arts or battle skills of any kind as they were a peaceful clan that just kept the environment nice and healthy so if they were attacked, they would just drench their attackers and knock them backwards and then run like hell. The Zhangcháo clan were led by a female water

panther who was Hydra's mother and was known as the Bride of the Peaceful Earth. She was a very sexy water panther in radiant clothes and jewels. She wore a purple dress that was belted at the waist with gold trimming and small red rubies around the hem. She wore a veil over her mouth and a tiara with a sapphire gem in the middle. She wore golden bracelets on both wrists, silver earrings, a large golden necklace with an emerald in the middle, a smaller necklace that dangled over the large one and had the Yin-Yang logo on it and she wore violet slippers that looked a little like the ones Matilda wore. She didn't wear an aqua-collar like all the water panthers as brides of a water panther clan had permanent water powers which were granted to them by the previous bride and she would in turn, grant permanent water powers to anyone in the clan she felt was deserving of such a gift. She was one beauty to behold, so beautiful in fact that her clan though she was even more beautiful then Princess Matilda herself! That was mostly due to the jewels she wore, the Bride of the Peaceful Earth favoured jewels more then Matilda did so she wore all those jewels on her as if she was some royal woman. Peaceful Earth was well respected by her fellow water panthers and she was as well respected as Ruben's deceased mother the Bride of the Gentle Waves amongst water panther kind. Anyone who disobeyed the clan's peaceful lives or tried to change the clan's way of life would feel the full wrath of this beautiful but deadly water panther. When Peaceful Earth was in a bad mood or angry with her water panthers, she was almost as scary as Zira the Ruthless. As of this moment, the Bride of the Peaceful Earth was sitting on a large stone in the middle of the lake, mastering the art of inner peace and enjoying the quiet. The jumpy Princess Matilda could do with inner peace lessons from her as she had already mastered inner peace and at a young age too. Peaceful Earth sat on the stone as still as a statue and completely at peace at this very moment. There was no wind and there was no one around right now so there was literally no noise at all in the lake, making it even more peaceful. The only sound Peaceful Earth could really hear was the soft beating of her own heart. She was really enjoying this quiet moment right now. Unfortunately for her, this peaceful moment of hers was rudely interrupted by the sound of footsteps coming. Peaceful Earth's ears twitched and they turned to where the sound was coming from. It was coming from the shore and it sounded like there were two people coming. The footsteps stopped and a voice

called out to her, a voice she knew too well.

"Mother! Mother!" Hydra called out to her.

Peaceful Earth sighed exasperatedly and her ears drooped down to the sides. Couldn't her son leave her alone for one minute?

"Hydra my son," sighed Peaceful Earth crossly, opening her eyes and waking up from her trance "Do you know what the penalty of interrupting a bride when she's meditating is?"

"I do mother." said Hydra with an apologetic look on his face "I'm dreadfully sorry for interrupting you mother. I have some good news for you."

"Have you found out who's been stealing every water panther's aqua-collars Hydra?" asked Peaceful Earth with a tinge of hope in her voice.

"Uh, no actually mother." said Hydra, hoping he wasn't disappointing his mother too much "We have a visitor. And this visitor is one we've met before."

"Really?" said Peaceful Earth, her voice indicating a heavy tone of "I'm not really that bothered right now" in her voice "Who is it?"

"The last remaining member of the Hailàng clan mother." said Hydra "Ruben, son of the Bride of the Gentle Waves."

Peaceful Earth stood up straight on her stone and she turned around to face the shore where Ruben and Hydra were standing and watching her. Peaceful Earth was the kind of person who kept her emotions in check and rarely showed signs of happiness or excitement, giving the impression that she was a pretty vapid and miserable character even though she did have a good heart and was capable of experiencing happiness and excitement. Peaceful Earth was rather surprised to see Ruben back in Chun-Nan again despite the fact his clan was dead and she was even more pleased to see Ruben still had his aqua-collar on. Peaceful Earth stepped off her stone and into the cool waters of the lake. She didn't mind as she loved water and her clothes were waterproof so swimming with

her clothes on wouldn't be as bad as swimming in normal clothes. Peaceful Earth swum back to the shore and she climbed out of the water. She looked squarely at Ruben and smiled at him. It was rare when this radiant but calm and flat woman smiled at anybody.

"Ruben." said Peaceful Earth "It truly is an honour to see the son of my good friend, Gentle Waters, again."

"Thank you Madame." said Ruben politely, bowing down to the elegant bride "It's an honour seeing someone with beauty as radiant as yours again."

"Let it never be said, I dearly enjoy your compliments Ruben." said Peaceful Earth with a dry smile on her face "Whatever have you been up to since your departure from the country after Zira… ahem…took your clan from you?"

"Quite a lot Peaceful Earth." said Ruben "I got captured by slave masters and forced to be part of a slave camp but I escaped, helped rescue the slaves and I've joined up with the Royal Fighters of Mobotropolis. I'm fighting alongside Sonic the Hedgehog now in this war against Dr. Eggman. I hope you're not too annoyed at that given your hatred of violence miss."

"Don't worry over my beliefs little boy." said Peaceful Earth gently "My opinions matter only to myself and I yield no control over anybody else so what they get up to is none of my business. However, fighting alongside the magnanimous Sonic the Hedgehog is truly an act of great honour. Fighting against the one person who threatens to end our peaceful lives and remould the planet into his image is definitely an act I must give my dearest praise to. I congratulate you for this honouree act Ruben. Your contribution to Eggman's defeat will be an honour to the water panther race as when we tell the next generation the story of Sonic, we can happily tell them a water panther has played a part in the downfall of the Eggman."

"Thank you." said Ruben "I'm pleased you see it that way miss."

"You are welcome Ruben." said Peaceful Earth "Now please, this way. The rest of the clan is at our campsite if you wish to meet

them."

With that said, Peaceful Earth led Ruben and Hydra over to the Zhangcháo clan's campsite. There were no villages or places like that anywhere near the lake s when the Zhangcháo clan took refuge here, they built their own houses to stay in. Their campsite consisted of a bunch of huts all made out of wood with straw roofs. The huts were really more like places to shelter from the rain in or sleep in at night rather then actual dwellings so if you lived in one of those huts, you shouldn't expect it to have all the conveniences an actual house has. The campsite was all the way on the other side of the lake and given the size of the lake, it was going to be a long walk around to get to the campsite. After walking all away around to the other side of the lake, the three water panthers arrived at the Zhangcháo clan's campsite and Peaceful Earth announced to her clan members.

"Fellow water panthers." she said "The last surviving member of the Hailàng clan has returned to Chun-Nan."

All the water panthers of the clan came out of their huts and they came out to see what was on the up and up. The water panthers of the Zhangcháo clan were all coloured the same blue and green combo Hydra was only they all had different markings on their fur, allowing for easy identification and some wore more then just a vest, gloves and boots too. Some water panthers wore shirts, some just wore shorts and any of the female water panthers in the clan wore either cute little skirts or leotards. Neither of the water panthers were wearing aqua collars for some reason. The moment the water panthers saw Ruben, their faces all lit up with glee. They all knew Ruben and his clan well so to see a member of the Hailàng clan still alive was a joy to them. The water panthers all ran over to Ruben and instantly began greeting him happily.

"Ruben! Good to see you alive old friend!" cried one male water panther.

"Our clan has missed seeing you Ruben." said another water panther, this one a girl "It's good to see you again."

"What have you been up to?" asked another male water panther.

"Have you been fighting any evil bad guys?" asked another female water panther.

"Are you coming back here permanently?" asked another male water panther.

"Guys, girls, calm down!" laughed Ruben "I'll explain everything! Just give me some breathing space!"

The water panthers stopped crowding around Ruben and they respectfully stood back so he could have some breathing space. Now the clan had settled down, Ruben began to tell everybody his story.

"You all know what happened to my clan." said Ruben.

"Yeah, that evil witch Zira killed everybody, including your mother!" yelled a water panther in swimming shorts.

"It was a horrible thing for her to do!" grumbled a female water panther in a skirt and bra combo with a golden ring around her tail "The Hailàng hadn't done anything to her so she had no right to kill our friends like that! How did you survive Ruben?"

"Due to my young age as I am the youngest of the clan," explained Ruben "Mother told me to flee and let the elder members do the fighting. I did so and when I came back to see if they'd won, all I saw were dead bodies, all with broken necks."

He paused for a moment to stifle a sob before he carried on.

"I was so sad about it that I fled the country to escape my sorrows." continued Ruben "But then I ended up getting kidnapped by some slave masters and forced to become a slave in their own camp. They've left their mark on me…"

He turned around and showed the clan the long pink scar he had on his back, earning some horrified gasps from the clan.

"That's disgusting!" yelled a rather large, well-toned water panther who looked nearly in his young adult years "What did those monsters do to you to give you that?"

"Whipped me." said Ruben grimly "Quite vigorously too. My back heaves just thinking about it. However, I escaped the camp and ran into Sonic the Hedgehog's twin-tailed sidekick Tails and his girlfriend Cosmo. I fell for Cosmo but after realizing she and Tails are together, I decided to leave them as its dis-honouree to steal other people's loved ones from then. Anyway, me, Tails and Cosmo freed the slaves and foiled the camp and then I helped save Sonic the Hedgehog from Dr. Eggman. Since that day, I've joined the R.F.S. and now I fight alongside Sonic the Hedgehog and his friends in this crusade for freedom."

"Cool!" cried the water panthers.

"You're fighting alongside the world famous Sonic the Hedgehog?" cried a female water panther in a violet leotard "You're so lucky Ruben! I've dreamed of meeting that hedgehog!"

"Yeah, Ruben here's one lucky bugger isn't he?" chuckled Hydra, playfully wrapping his arm around Ruben's neck and giving him another noogie-noogie "He gets to save the day with Sonic the Hedgehog! No one can top that honour-wise can they?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Hydra let go of me!" squealed Ruben "You're ruffling my fur!"

"Oh quit whining, I'm not rubbing your scalp THAT hard!" giggled Hydra as he let go of Ruben.

Ruben flattened down his now ruffled fur on his scalp and he turned back to the water panthers.

"So as you can see, despite the death of my clan," he said "I've moved on from the tragedy and my life's taking a turn for the better. It's like mother always said "There are things in life that may sadden you, but if you don't try to move on from those things, they'll plague your mind until you lose focus on all things important."."

"Too right." said Hydra "Despite your clan's death, you don't let it haunt you all the time and you focus on the now, that is always the best thing. Put the past behind you as they say."

"Yes." said Ruben "Now, how's things been…"

He was suddenly cut off in mid-sentence when he noticed something a little bit odd about the Zhangcháo clan water panthers. Every single water panther was missing their aqua-collar. When Ruben last saw them, they all had aqua-collars on save Bride of the Peaceful Earth as she had permanent water powers anyway and now the clan were missing their aqua-collars. What had happened while he was gone then?

"Um, excuse me for asking but, what happened to all your aqua-collars?" asked Ruben "All of you are missing them for some reason."

The Zhangcháo water panthers all felt their necks and realized that Ruben had noticed that they didn't have any aqua-collars. Their gleeful expressions fell into solemn expressions and they all looked at Ruben grimly. Peaceful Earth shared the same expression they all had.

"We were going to talk to you about this Ruben." said Peaceful Earth glumly "As you can see, you've arrived in Chun-Nan at a very dark time for us water panthers."

"Why? What's going on?" asked Ruben "Please tell me."

"A mysterious robber has been going around stealing aqua-collars from all thirteen water panther clans in the west regions of Chun-Nan." explained Peaceful Earth solemnly "My clan has unfortunately fell victim to this thief. Within the last week, every member of my clan has had their collar stolen. Hydra has been lucky enough to keep hold of his but the rest of my clan hasn't been so lucky. We have no idea when this started but we've heard from the other clans that their aqua collars have been stolen so the thief must have been at this for a while. We have no idea why this thief is stealing water panther aqua-collars but we fear that it maybe for a nefarious purpose."

Ruben couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"Oh my gosh… that's terrible!" he cried "Just awful! How could some

horrible person do this? Steal all our aqua-collars and therefore, render us incapable of using our water powers? That's just horrible!"

"It is indeed Ruben." said Peaceful Earth gravely "Truly abominable to water panther kind. We strive to catch the thief but we've had no luck so far. I'm grateful to the ancestors that my son Hydra hasn't lost his collar yet. He's been lucky to keep hold of his."

"That thief will never get me!" boasted Hydra "I'm too tough, sneaky and smart for a silly collar thief! Next time I see that thief though, I'll marmalize him!"

"I don't think there'll be a "next time"." said Ruben, noticing a little detail Hydra missed "I mean, the thief's stolen collars from all the water panther clans, he won't be coming out again."

"He will." said Hydra "He hasn't got mine yet and now you're back in Chun-Nan…the thief might target you next as you still have your collar Ruben!"

Ruben's tail quivered nervously and he clutched his throat in fear. That was a good point. If the thief realized that he'd come back to Chun-Nan then it might target him next! The thief might try to steal his aqua-collar!

"No!" cried Ruben "I can't let that thief steal my aqua-collar! We've gotta catch that thief and bring him to justice!"

"But how can we catch the thief if we don't know who it is?" asked a water panther in a frilly dress and pink bow on her head.

"We'll track down the thief." said Ruben "Me and Hydra will be the best ones to find the thief as we still have our collars. We'll subdue the thief with our water powers and then force him to spill the rice on us."

"Absolutely not Ruben!" snapped Peaceful Earth "No member of the Zhangcháo clan will be getting tangled up in a mission that may involve violence and danger! Hydra is the only water panther in my clan who still has his collar, I'm not risking him losing it! You Ruben can do what you like as I am not your leader and I hold no control

over you but Hydra obeys my rules and I say he remains here with the others."

"Oh mother! Don't be such a killjoy!" whined Hydra "Me and Ruben will be a great team together! Please let me go and catch this scandalous fiend who dares to rob us of our collars!"

"Not on the emperor's life!" said Peaceful Earth coldly "You will remain here and Ruben can find the thief himself. Or even better, the emperor and those kung-fu masters Bladefeather, Mushu or even his daughter Princess Matilda can find the thief. It is their job to ensure things in Chun-Nan remain as they should and all evil is punished for their crimes."

"Oh mother, you really are too soppy for your own good aren't you?" asked Hydra crossly "Our clan's had all their collars stolen and I only want to help the clan and you won't let me? Where's the honour this clan strives for all the time?"

"Not another word out of you!" shouted Peaceful Earth angrily "Get in to your hut and stay there until you can learn to speak to your bride properly!"

Hydra fumed angrily at his mother and he stormed off into his hut in a huff, cursing inaudibly to himself. After Hydra went into his hut, Ruben spoke again.

"Peaceful Earth, excuse my saying so," he said "But I don't think its right to punish Hydra for trying to do what's right…"

"Silence!" snapped Peaceful Earth "Ruben, if you wish to apprehend the thief then you may do so. We will not risk our only water panther losing his aqua collar. It's bad enough our clan can't use its water powers now their collars have been stolen."

"Very well." said Ruben "I give you my word of honour the thief will be found and your collars will return."

With that said, Ruben decided to leave the Zhangcháo clan alone and try to find the aqua-collar thief. He turned away and walked away from the clan and headed off to the other side of the lake. The

Zhangcháo clan watched as Ruben left and while they weren't looking, Hydra crept out of his tent and slid into the waters of the lake. He swam away from the camp and followed Ruben while underwater. Water panthers could hold their breath for a while, up to ten minutes to be precise so Hydra could stay under for a good time and he was a fast swimmer so he would catch up to Ruben quickly. As Ruben left and Hydra escaped, one of the Zhangcháo water panthers turned to Peaceful Earth.

"Miss, do you think Ruben will find the thief?" asked the water panther with a heavy tone of concern in his voice.

"I doubt that one water panther will be able to find the thief on his own." said Peaceful Earth softly "Knowing Ruben, he'll do something more sensible and ask for someone to aid him such as the kung fu masters or Princess Matilda. It still amazes me that our country's princess actually knows kung-fu and defeated the ones who were sabotaging the Five Festivals of Holy Honour last year. She'll be of great help to Ruben."

"I really hope we find the thief so that I can give him or her a piece of my mind!" yelled the broad water panther, flexing his muscles.

"That's quite enough Pi Kong." said Peaceful Earth sternly "Now my water panthers, you may continue with your activities."

The water panthers obeyed Peaceful Earth's order and they ran off to continue with what they were doing before Ruben arrived. Peaceful Earth swam back over to the rock in the lake she was sitting on earlier and she sat back on it to meditate some more.

Meanwhile, Ruben had just made it to the other side of the lake and various thoughts were swimming through his head like fish in a bowl.

Aqua-collar thief. he thought to himself *Who's stealing all the water panther's aqua-collars? And why would they do something like this? What are they doing it for? Will they target me when they realize that they've missed one? They might and since Hydra's been forbidden from helping me, I'll need someone else to help me. I'll get Bladefeather and Mushu to help me as they're kung-fu masters and they love to help. If I can't find them I'll ask the princess instead.*

Who knows? Maybe I'll get to see her kung-fu in action since Sonic claims she is capable of fighting…

Then suddenly, Hydra popped out of the waters and made Ruben leap into the air like a frightened cat (well, he is technically a cat as panthers are part of the feline family). When Ruben landed back on his feet, he realized that it was only Hydra and he had just come up for air.

"What's up Ruben?" asked Hydra "Did I scare you?"

"You bloomin' did Hydra!" cried Ruben "I wasn't expecting you to suddenly leap out of the water as I was leaving the Lake of Holy Waters! By the way, what are you doing here? I thought Peaceful Earth just grounded you!"

"She did but that was then." sneered Hydra "I'm not letting mother stop me from doing what's right. I'm catching that thief whether she wants me to or not! When me and you deliver the thief to the Zhangcháo clan, mother will think twice before trying to stop me from doing good things for the clan and country!"

"I dunno Hydra, you might get in serious trouble." said Ruben worriedly "You should go back now before you get in trouble with your mother. She's one dangerous weapon when she's in a bad mood."

"Do I look like I'm bothered?" scoffed Hydra "Besides, mother can't tell me off for saving the water panthers once we find the thief and get our collars back. I've done good and she can't say anything about it."

"OK then Hydra." said Ruben "Let's go and find the thief. We'll start at the village and see if we can find anybody suspicious there."

"What do we do after we've searched the village?" asked Hydra.

"We search in every place possible." said Ruben "Even the places the Raiju clan and Yīnyǐng Mao clan live. Speaking of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan, I bet it's them who are behind all this! They're the only evil ninjas around who aren't incarcerated!"

"Nah, the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's been quiet since Fong Zarr got arrested after Matilda foiled their Festival Folly plot." explained Hydra "They won't be behind all this."

"Oh? Fong Zarr's incarcerated too?" asked Ruben "Well I don't live in Chun-Nan anymore so I'm gonna be slow on the updates here. Oh well, we'll keep our senses alert and see if we can find out who the thief really is and then we can bring the thief to justice and get all the water panthers of Chun-Nan their collars back."

"Boy will that thief be sorry he missed with us!" laughed Hydra "We'll show him what happens when someone steals our aqua-collars!"

"We certainly will." chuckled Ruben "Especially as I know novice level kung-fu and ninjutsu both at once."

With that said the two water panthers left the Lake of Holy Waters behind and headed off to the village where they would look for anyone suspicious and see if he or she was the thief they were looking for. Unbeknownst to them though, two shadowy figures were hiding in some thick bushes nearby and watching them intently. They were two ninja cats who worked for the Yīnyǐng Mao clan, a clan of shadowy ninja cats who pillage villages and steal valuables and do what they can to get power. The cats watched the water panthers and they looked at each other.

"Two water panthers are going to the village." said the first cat "One of them the last surviving member of the Hailàng clan. We should kidnap those two and bring them to our temple."

"I agree Zhou Kai." said the second cat "We can exchange the panthers for Fong Zarr and get him out of prison at last. The emperor is fond of the water panther race and will do anything to ensure their safety so he'll answer our ransoms without hesitance."

"Agreed Shang Dao." said Zhou Kai "We shall ambush them in the village and then take them to our temple and lock them in the dungeons until Emperor Tai answers our ransom."

With that said, the ninja cats sneaked out of the bushes and quietly followed Ruben and Hydra to the village, Those water panthers

wouldn't see them coming given their quiet nature and they were as good as caught in a matter of minutes…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 2**

**** Remember Arc 6: The Five Festivals of Chun-Nan? Huh? Do ya? DO YA?**

***** Zhangcháo means "High Tide" in Chinese**

****** They were killed after Super Scourge destroyed the Empire City MPD station in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 89***

******* See *Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius* Story 55**

Well, Ruben's getting more then he bargained for isn't he? He's now helping the whole water panther race get their collars back! Will he do so? Or will the Yinying Mao ninjas get him first? And are they the theives? Maybe the next part has the answers so stay tuned! Reviews are welcome unless they're complaints or flames.

So PROJECT 1-21-18-9-1-19 how does it feel seeing one of your fave OCs getting his own arc and how's it looking so far?

The Water Panther Plunder 2

Arc 12: The Water Panther Plunder

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 95-97

Part 2: Tangling with Shadowy Cats

The village of Chun-Nan was always a nice place to visit when you visit the country. Its beautiful houses, friendly locals and great market stalls and shops made it a popular tourist attraction for anyone visiting the country. Every day, the village seemed to be bustling with shoppers and friends meeting up with one another but right now, there were two individuals who weren't in the village to do shopping. They were looking for a thief, a thief who's decided to steal all the water panther's aqua-collars and render them unable to use their famous water powers. Those two were (who else?) Ruben and Hydra, the only water panthers alive who still had their collars on. Ruben had returned to Chun-Nan for a little visit and the lone Hailàng clan member ended up getting more then he bargained for on this return. He hadn't expected to end up on a mission to find all the missing aqua-collars but he didn't mind. Ruben was not going home until he knew the water panthers were safe and they all had their aqua-collars back. He was determined to find the thief and make him pay for his crimes against water panther kind. Hydra, one of his friends from the Zhangcháo clan was accompanying him and he was determined to retrieve all the stolen aqua-collars even if it killed him. Even though his mother, the Bride of the Peaceful Earth, had forbidden him to go on this mission, he had blatantly ignored her and run off with Ruben to find the aqua-collar thief. He was the kind of boy who didn't really like listening to his mother and liked to do what he liked. Right now, they were searching through the village to see if they could find anyone suspicious and start questioning them about the thief and if they were the one they were looking for. Even though Ruben knew the village well and knew that seldom bad people resided in the village, it never hurts to look. Especially as the thief could be hiding in the village amongst the crowd somewhere.

Ruben and Hydra kept their eyes open and their senses alert for any sign of suspicion amongst the citizens. So far, they found none. None of the citizens seemed out of the ordinary. Everything seemed completely normal.

"It seems that the village is completely normal." said Ruben "Everybody seems innocent."

"I beg to differ Ruben." said Hydra "That guy selling the woks looks a little shifty to me."

Ruben looked in Hydra's direction and noticed that Hydra was pointing at a wok stall and the owner of the stall was a goat who looked very grumpy and very gruff. It seemed that he really hated his job and the only reason he was doing it was because he had nothing better to do and there was no other job for him. Ruben just pulled an "I'm not impressed" face at Hydra and he folded his arms.

"That's only Mr. Niújiǎo*." said Ruben "He's always grumpy but he's not evil so don't suspect him even for a minute Hydra."

"OK Mr. Know-it-all." said Hydra casually "After all, you're the people expert aren't you?"

"No I'm not." said Ruben "I just know Mr. Niújiǎo that's all. I don't know anybody else around here."

"In that case, I take back the "people expert" comment." said Hydra "So ol' goat face is off the suspect list. In fact, I don't think the thief's in the village. Everybody seems innocent."

"Yeah they do." said Ruben as he surveyed the people that walked past him and Hydra "Although that just means either the thief's a master of disguise or he really isn't here."

"I say we should ask somebody and see if they've heard about what's happening to the water panthers." said Hydra "Now let's see, who should we ask?"

The two water panthers began eyeing citizens that walked past them, wondering who they could ask. Then Ruben spotted somebody who was buying a tea kettle from a pottery stall just

further down the market. The person was a red female vixen who wore a purple tunic like top, purple baggy trousers, black boots and black armbands on her wrists. Her hair was black and styled in a long, loose ponytail. To Hydra's surprise, Ruben knew the vixen.

"Hey look! It's Li Moon, Princess Matilda's friend!" cried Ruben, pointing at her "Maybe she knows something about the water panthers having their collars stolen."

"OK, how the ruddy hell do you know that girl?" asked Hydra "And how do you know she and Matilda are pals?"

"I've met her before noodle head." said Ruben, giving Hydra a noogie on the head "Even though Li Moon isn't related to loyalty, she and Matilda are close friends and they often see each other when Matilda goes shopping."

"Gosh, I wish I knew this much about the princess!" grumbled Hydra "I envy you Ruben, you get to meet the royals and know a bit about them! What makes you so special then?"

"Hydra, please don't envy me." said Ruben "I don't like it when I make people jealous. That's the only reason I've let Tails keep Cosmo so I don't make him envious towards me, although I'd love it if Cosmo wanted me instead of him as she's so pretty."

"I beg your pardon?" asked Hydra, wondering what the flying monkey nuts Ruben was talking about.

"Nothing." said Ruben quickly, fighting hard to keep the blush off his face "Let's go meet Li Moon and see if she knows anything."

"I wouldn't get too hopeful on that." said Hydra "Just because she's Matilda's friend, it doesn't mean she'll know everything like she and the emperor do."

Ruben and Hydra ran over to the vixen in the tunic like top. Li Moon had bought the tea kettle and was just about to leave the stall until Ruben and Hydra caught up to her and stopped her. Li Moon stopped where she was and she looked at Ruben in surprise. Her eyes widened and her face brightened.

"Why hello there Ruben." she said "I haven't seen you since you were five. Look how you've grown since then, you becoming a big boy already."

"Thank you Li Moon." said Ruben bashfully, his face faintly turning pink with embarrassment "It's nice to see you looking so well too. How's things been going with you?"

"Very well thank you." said Li Moon politely "Me and Matilda are still in touch and we've planned to meet out here anytime soon. Matilda's going to talk to me about her recent kung-fu training and climb to the expert stage of kung-fu. Did you know that she stopped the Yīnyǐng Mao clan from assassinating the emperor during the Five Festivals of Holy Honour last year?"

"No." sad Ruben honestly "I don't live here anymore. I live in Mobotropolis along with Sonic the Hedgehog and friends. Mobotropolis has just recently been rebuilt and its opening ceremony is about to commence back home. In fact, I bet it's…"

"Hey Ruben! I thought we were going to question this chick, not stir up a conversation with her!" yelled Hydra impatiently.

"Hydra! Where are your manners?" snapped Ruben "I was just about to get to the questioning until you interrupted me!"

"Questioning?" piped Li Moon, suddenly looking nervous as if she'd done something bad and was going to be asked about it "You want to question me? Why? Have I done something wrong?"

"No! No, no, no! Not at all!" cried Ruben quickly "It's not that kind of questioning! We just wanna ask you about some recent events and we're interested in seeing if you know anything about it!"

"Oh really?" said Li Moon "What are you going to ask me about then?"

"Have you heard anything about an aqua-collar thief at all sister?" asked Hydra.

"Aqua-collar thief?" echoed Li Moon, thinking for a moment "What do you mean?"

"Every water panther in Chun-Nan sans me and Ruben have had their collars stolen and we're looking for the thief." explained Hydra "You know anything about it moon girl?"

Li Moon thought to herself for a moment and then remembered something Matilda had told her before.

"Oh yes. I know what you mean now." said Li Moon in realization "All the water panthers have had their collars stolen and Emperor Dalon Tai is striving to find out who's stealing them. As a matter of facts…I think I saw the thief last night."

"You did?" piped Ruben and Hydra both at once.

"I think I did." said Li Moon "I was in bed sleeping at the time and then I heard a noise outside that woke me up and I peeked through the window of my home to see what it was. I saw something obscured in the shadows and it was carrying a purple collar in its hands. I couldn't make out what it was as it was dark but I think it was vaguely cat like. I don't fully know so you should take my guesses with a grain of rice. I'm sorry I can't be of much help to you both."

Ruben and Hydra both looked at each other and they began thinking hard to themselves. Vaguely cat like? True Li Moon wasn't so sure about what she had seen but if she was right then that meant the thief was either some sort of feline or a Yīnyǐng Mao ninja. But was Li Moon's guesses really going to help them that much as she herself wasn't so sure what the thief looked like? Well this piece of information was the first clue they had received and they had to keep it in mind until they could prove it or disprove it as the information they needed.

"So Li Moon, you think the thief's some sort of cat?" asked Ruben "Is that correct?"

"Yes, I couldn't see too well but the shadow did seem cat like to me." said Li Moon "It didn't look much like anything else."

"Well if the thief's some sort of cat then it must be the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!" declared Ruben, slamming his fist on the palm of his other

hand "They're the only evil cats in Chun-Nan who aren't incarcerated right now so it's got to be them!"

"That's preposterous Ruben, why ever would the Yīnyǐng Mao clan steal aqua-collars?" asked Hydra "They're not gems or treasures of any kind and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan wants power. They're not interested in making us water panthers just, you know, panthers without water powers."

"Well we water panthers can get in the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's way." explained Ruben "In fact, we have done several times in the past. We water panthers have foiled their schemes more often then not so they might be stealing the collars in an attempt to leave us unable to use our water powers and then we'd be less of a threat as our water powers made us a nuisance to them and are the reason we overpower them so easily."

"That isn't a bad suggestion Ruben." said Li Moon supportively "But their leader's in prison so you'd think their first option would be to break him out first and then steal the collars. They're not so good without Fong Zarr leading them."

"No they're not." said Ruben "So maybe the Yīnyǐng Mao clan aren't behind all this. They usually do things under Fong Zarr's orders but since he's not here, there's no one to lead them…unless they decided to get a new leader to save having to break Fong Zarr out and their new leader's probably behind the theft of the aqua-collars."

"Well we don't know without proper evidence." said Hydra "Li Moon's info is too vague so we can't base our deductions entirely on that, we need to find some more clues before we jump to conclusions."

"I still strongly think it's the Yīnyǐng Mao clan." said Ruben "But I won't bang the gong yet until I find out it really is them or not. We should keep searching and see…"

Before Ruben could finish his sentence, two black cats in black ninja attire leaped out from behind the pottery shop Li Moon had just bought her kettle from and they pounced on the water panthers. Li Moon screamed in terror and she dropped her kettle. The kettle shattered to pieces on the ground and one of the panthers clasped

his paw over her mouth, silencing her and stopping her from screaming.

"Quiet sweetheart, we don't want any of the kung-fu masters coming here and foiling our objectives." purred the cat menacingly, his voice darker then the shadows themselves.

Li Moon struggled in the cat's grasp but being as she was just a perfectly normal person with no martial arts skills whatsoever, she had no chance of escaping this cat's grasp. As for the other cat, he grabbed Ruben and Hydra by their throats and he held them off the ground and to his height. Ruben and Hydra struggled in the grasp of the ninja cat but the cat had a firm grip on them and they couldn't get free.

"You two will come with us peacefully or innocent people are going to get hurt." warned the cat in a threatening tone "We will not hesitate to inflict harm on anyone around, especially the girl."

He motioned to Li Moon who was being held by his partner and had her mouth covered by his paw so she couldn't cry for help. Ruben and Hydra were not going to let themselves get bested by Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas so they both squirted the ninja cat in the face with their water powers. The cat was drenched by them and he let go of them in order to get the water out of his eyes. Ruben and Hydra then tripped up the cat and Ruben squirted the other one in the eyes. The cat screeched in pain and he let go of Li Moon so he could rub his eyes better. Li Moon ran for it and took shelter behind a nearby stall as she did not want to get into this fight. The ninja cats picked themselves up and they bent down in battle ready stances. Ruben prepared to battle whereas Hydra just stood back. Ruben wondered why Hydra was backing off like that.

"Hey Hydra, aren't you gonna help me?" asked Ruben.

"I come from a clan of pacifists Ruben!" retorted Hydra "I don't know how to fight! We don't get trained to do so because of the Zhangcháo clan's soppy nature!"

"Then I guess I'll have to do the dirty work myself then." muttered Ruben "Hey Yīnyǐng! Get ready for some Hailàng style punishment!"

"Only fools take on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!" snarled one of the cats "You will suffer badly for your defiance little one!"

With that said, Ruben and the two ninja cats leaped into battle. Ruben got the first drop on the cats by split-kicking them both onto their sides but the cats weren't down for long. They both picked themselves up and double-teamed Ruben with a pair of kicks to the legs. Ruben was brought down onto his stomach and he groaned in pain. The ninja cats were about to attack Ruben again but Hydra blasted them with a jet of water each and the two cats were thrown off their feet. Hydra may not be able to fight but he can be a great distraction thanks to his water powers. The cats picked themselves up and one decided to get Hydra while the other fought with Ruben. Ruben and the first ninja cat began punching at each other at rapid speeds that only ninjas, novice or master, could provide. Given how Ruben was a novice though, the ninja cat's attacks were better then his were and he soon began to overpower Ruben with his superior punches. He gut-punched Ruben and then backhanded him into the pottery shop that Li Moon had bought her kettle from. Ruben landed on the stall and he smashed al the pottery, much to the shock of the stall owner who looked like he was about to go mental. Ruben picked himself up and he grabbed a vase that hadn't been broken yet. He threw the vase at the ninja cat but the cat broke the vase with a quick chop and the pieces fell to the ground after that attack. Ruben leaped out of the stall and he pounced on the ninja cat but the cat grabbed Ruben and threw him across the marketplace and he crashed onto the ground further up the market. Ruben groaned and grimaced as pain flooded through his body but he picked himself up just in time to get back into the battle. The cat charged towards Ruben and prepared to punch him but Ruben dodged, leaving the cat to punch the ground instead and leave a crack in it. Ruben roundhouse punched the cat in the legs as he was much smaller then the cat but the cat roundhouse punched him back and sent him spiralling into another stall. He bumped into the stall and made it shudder slightly. The cat tried to attack Ruben again but Ruben launched himself at the cat and kick-slammed him in the gut. Ruben knocked the cat down onto the ground and he grabbed him by the collar of his uniform. He threw the cat into the ground a few feet up from where he was and then he squirted him with water just to add insult to injury.

As for poor Hydra, since he couldn't fight, he had to run away from his opponent and play cat-and-mouse with him. Unfortunately, Hydra was the mouse and the cat was, ahem, the cat. The cat launched a punch at Hydra but he missed and punched the ground instead. Hydra squirted him with water in order to knock him backwards and then he ran over to a stall selling woks. He grabbed a wok and threw it at the cat. The cat however, caught the wok before it could hit him and he threw it back at Hydra. Hydra grabbed another wok and he smacked the other wok away before it could hit him. The ninja cat drew out a katana and lunged at Hydra. Hydra freaked and he blocked the katana attack with his wok. The cat slashed at Hydra but Hydra blocked the attack with the wok again. He smacked the cat in the stomach with the wok but the cat remained standing and he swiped at him with the katana. The two clashed weapons again and Hydra tried to whack the ninja with his wok. The cat blocked the attack and he snatched the wok off Hydra. He walloped Hydra with the wok and knocked him clean out in one hit. Hydra collapsed to the ground, unconscious and beaten. The ninja cat grabbed Hydra and draped him over his shoulder.

"That's one." he said to himself "I can't imagine Shang Dao will be having much trouble with the other water panther as his fighting skills barely compare to ours."

The cat was right to think that as his partner was winning his fight against Ruben due to his superior martial arts skills. The cat Ruben was fighting was well into the intermediate stage whereas Ruben was only a novice so the cat was much better at his ninjutsu then he was. The only advantage Ruben had over the cat were his water powers and even then, they weren't that useful as the cat could just dodge his water squirts like the speedy ninja he is. Ruben tried to throw a water ball at the ninja cat but the ninja cat back flipped away from the water ball and then kicked upwards with his leg to destroy the ball and reduce it to drops of water. That attack was more of a distraction really as Ruben leaped into the air and he rapidly kicked the ninja cat in the face, making him stagger backwards as he did so, and Ruben then roundhouse kicked him onto the ground. The ninja cat picked himself up and drew out a pair of nunchakus. He twirled the weapons around and tried to smack Ruben with them but Ruben dodged and pounced on his back. He wrapped his arms

around the cat's neck and began to choke him. The cat gagged and spluttered as Ruben began to throttle him and he dropped his nunchakus.

"Say uncle!" yelled Ruben "Go on! Say it! Say uncle you stupid cat!"

There was no way in hell a Yinying Mao ninja was going to say uncle to a water panther who is only ten years of age and the last survivor of his clan, not even if he were being tortured to death by him. The ninja cat had had enough of being throttled so he grabbed Ruben's arms and threw him off of his back and onto the ground with a heavy slam. Ruben grimaced as he his back made sharp contact with the hard ground they stood upon. That attack had hurt him pretty seriously and it pained him just to stand back up. Ruben strained himself as he stood back up but the cat picked up his nunchakus and began to beat him heavily with the vicious weapons. He swung the nunchakus and walloped Ruben in the head, back, behind his knees, the legs and stomach. Ruben cried out in pain as he was whacked by the nunchakus and every hit seemed to get harder and harder as the cat continued his relentless onslaught. The cat kept up the heating of the nunchakus and didn't give Ruben a chance to fight back. He was moving that fast that Ruben didn't even have the time to predict his moves and block them. The cat gave Ruben one final wallop of the nunchakus to the face and Ruben fell down onto his knees and began panting. His eyes were streaming with tears. Not tears as in crying tears, more like pained tears. Those nunchakus hurt and at the novice level of ninjutsu or any other martial arts, you're not that well built to take the blows and the pain they inflict on you is colossal. The nunchakus had hurt Ruben so badly he couldn't even stand back up. He was too weak to even do that. The cat advanced on Ruben and then walloped him in the back of his head with the nunchakus, knocking him clean out and leaving him to lie on the ground in defeat. The cat smiled at his victory and he scooped up the knocked out Ruben. He draped Ruben on his shoulder and wondered over to his partner who had the knocked out Hydra on his shoulder.

"I've got the Hailàng survivor Zhou Kai." said the cat.

"Excellent work Shang Dao." said the other cat who's name was Zhou Kai apparently "These two will make fine hostages for our

ransom. The last member of the Hailàng clan and a member of the Zhangcháo clan are just too valuable for the emperor to lose as he cares a lot about water panthers."

Li Moon, who had been watching the whole fight, was horrified to see that the water panthers had been beaten and captured and she ran out of her hiding place to confront the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas. The cats looked at the vixen with their steely cat eyes and they scowled at her.

"Oh please, let those water panthers go." begged Li Moon "Please don't hurt them. Take me instead, I'll be valuable to you, just please let those panthers go…"

"Shut up!" growled Shang Dao, backhanding the poor vixen into a wok stall as viciously as he could "We have no time to deal with snivelling peasant girls!"

Li Moon crashed into the stall and the woks on display all fell off the stall and onto the ground around her. The fox in the purple tunic like top groaned in pain and she rubbed her head tenderly to ease the pain. Zhou Kai walked up to Li Moon and stared down at her from his height. Li Moon stared back at him fearfully, wondering what the Yīnyǐng Mao cat was going to do to her.

"We shall now flee this village." said Zhou Kai "If you dare try to follow us then we will kill you."

Li Moon nodded understandingly and she remained where she was. Now that that was dealt with, the ninja cats both ran out of the village, hopped onto some roof tops and headed back to their temple which was a good distance away from the village but given their ninja speed, that wasn't going to be a problem for them. Li Moon just watched helplessly as the two cats fled the village with Ruben and Hydra in tow. The moment they were gone though, she picked herself up and ran for it as fast as she could.

"This is terrible!" cried Li Moon "Ruben and Hydra have been kidnapped by the Yīnyǐng Mao clan! I've gotta help them! I know just the person who can save them though! Princess Matilda! She'll save them in no time!"

Li Moon ran out of the village headed for the Pagoda of Prosperity, the home place of the emperor and princess of Chun-Nan. Since Li Moon knew about Matilda's kung-fu abilities, she knew that the princess was going to be able to save Ruben and Hydra. She just hoped that the Yīnyǐng Mao clan weren't planning to do anything to them back at their temple…

Ever since her training with Kai Zen earlier, Princess Matilda couldn't stop thinking about the terrible vision she'd had during the inner peace lesson. Her lessons had finished for the day and Matilda had returned home to the Pagoda of Prosperity and was sitting back on a silk cushion and thinking about the vision she'd had. Even though Master Kai had told her to take this whole thing lightly and that visions seldom did come true, she couldn't help but wonder if her vision was going to be one of the few visions that came true. It really was a terrible vision too, Chun-Nan is ravaged, she chases some unknown assailant and then the assailant's troops get the drop on her and everything becomes darkness. What was the vision trying to tell her? Was it warning her about events that were yet to come? Was it just a silly little nightmare brought on by her anxieties and unsettled mind? Or was it a foreshadowing of her death and the destruction of Chun-Nan? And if that was the case, who could possibly be behind it? Zira the Ruthless was incarcerated so it couldn't be about her. It couldn't be about the Yīnyǐng Mao clan either as their leader Fong Zarr is also incarcerated and the clan itself isn't enough to take over Chun-Nan and the vision certainly wasn't talking about the treacherous Governor Shen because he was dead. And she didn't even dare think the vision was talking about the Raiju clan because they were allies. They had helped defeat Zira so the vision couldn't possibly be about them. Maybe the vision was about a forthcoming new foe that would threaten the lives of everybody in Chun-Nan. If that was the case then could this new foe be stopped? Even by someone as powerful as herself? These questions were all so unsettling and Matilda was driving herself crazy just asking them to herself. She wished dearly that she'd never had that vision in the first place and now she'd had it, it was going to continue haunting her until either the day she died or if it finally happened. And if it did happen, she would make sure that it

wouldn't fold out exactly as she'd envisioned it. She was the princess of Chun-Nan and a kung-fu warrior who was almost at the expert stage and Matilda was going to do everything in her power to ensure Chun-Nan's safety. No vision, as bad as it was, is going to cloud her vision of what's important and what's happening now. As Matilda continued to swim in her thoughts, her father, Emperor Dalon Tai, walked in carrying a bowl of wontons, Matilda's most favourite food in all the world and he had a jar of curry sauce for her to put on her wontons. Wontons and curry sauce were one of Matilda's favourite food combos.

"Matilda dearest, lunch is ready." said Tai.

Matilda snapped out of her thoughts and her nose picked up the delicious smell of wontons. Not even a nightmarish vision could distract her from her favourite food. In fact, the smell of wontons had brought her out of her train of thoughts and made her happier already (that's how much she loves them!). Matilda got up from the cushion and knelt down to the table (in old tradition, Chinese people would kneel down at a low table instead of sitting at one like we do). She poured the curry sauce over her wontons, picked up her chopsticks and grabbed one with them. Then she lifted the wonton up and popped it into her mouth. The taste never got old to her, she could eat these things forever they tasted that good. Tai knelt down to the table with Matilda and set down a cup for himself and her and a kettle full of Chinese tea. He then ate his own bowl of wontons with her. The two royals ate their lunches in total silence and once they'd finished, they both gave off a polite belch to one another (in China, it's polite to belch after your meals and the same fact applies in Chun-Nan).

"Mmm, mmm." said Matilda happily "Thanks daddy, your wontons never lose their goodness not matter how many times I eat them."

"Your welcome my treasure." said Tai brightly as he began pouring himself some tea "Want some tea?"

"Yes please daddy." said Matilda, holding her cup out for Tai to fill.

Tai filled Matilda's cup with tea and Matilda sipped it. Chun-Nan made good tea and Matilda always enjoyed drinking it.

"So Matilda, how did your lessons go today?" asked Tai curiously.

Matilda's face fell and she put her cup of tea down. She was hoping her dad wasn't going to bring that up as she was trying to put her nightmarish vision in the back of her mind and this lunch and tea she'd had was helping with that. Matilda just brightened her face up and decided not to bring up the vision.

"They went well dad." said Matilda "I'm getting closer to mastering inner peace and I can almost steal that jade monkey off Master Kai now. I couldn't get close to stealing that thing off him when I was younger."

"That's wonderful to hear." said Tai briskly "You're almost at the expert stage of kung-fu Matilda. I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of you."

"I know daddy." said Matilda "As much as I hate violence and would have much preferred not to learn kung-fu in the first place, I'm actually kinda glad I did learn these lessons. I'll never be helpless, I can defend myself and I can keep you and my people safe from harm. Learning kung-fu was for the best of everybody and not just me."

"You're absolutely right Matilda." said Tai "Just out of interest, how are you and Bladefeather…ahem…getting along since you've revealed your love to one another?"

Matilda blushed slightly before answering her father.

"We're getting along great." said Matilda "Bladefeather's been a proper gentlemen to me on our dates and we're already planning on our future together. I've told him I'd love to be a mother and Bladefeather, despite his hatred of children, has promised me that if we have a kid, he'll try his hardest to grin and bear it."

"That's very nice of him." said Tai "I'm really pleased that you're going out with Bladefeather. He's a good person he is, even if he briefly aided Zira the Ruthless in her goals last year but he had no choice then. It's good that Bladefeather and Mushu are free from Zira so they can continue to defend Chun-Nan from evil much like

you Matilda."

"I know." said Matilda "And I really do love Bladefeather. He completely won me over with his kindness and loyalty to us. I love those kind of qualities in a man and Bladefeather excels in both of them."

"Yes he does." said Tai "And Mushu is equally as loyal as Bladefeather is. Just a pity he cannot talk anymore."

"Mushu was a good joke when he was able to talk." said Matilda "Pity he'll never joke again now Zira's broken his voice box. At least he's still the same guy despite…"

Their conversation was interrupted by a knock on the door that startled the two mongooses.

"Whoever could that be?" asked Tai.

Tai picked himself up from the table and he wondered over to the door. He slid the door open and to his surprise, Li Moon was standing there and she looked frantic.

"Oh, Li Moon." said Tai in surprise "This is a surprise. What brings you here then? Matilda was planning on meeting you later."

"Is Matilda home?" asked Li Moon "It's urgent I see her! Something terrible has happened!"

Matilda's ears pricked up and she got up from the table to see Li Moon. What was going on now and what was Li Moon going to tell her about.

"Hello Li Moon." said Matilda "What's happened?"

"Two Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas ambushed Ruben and Hydra the Water Panthers and they've kidnapped them!" cried Li Moon "The Yīnyǐng Mao clan are gonna do something terrible to them, I know they are! You've gotta save them and fast!"

"Oh my goodness!" cried Matilda "Ruben and Hydra have been kidnapped by the Yīnyǐng Mao clan? That's awful! But how did they

get Ruben? He doesn't live here anymore."

"If I were to guess, Ruben's come back for a visit and got ambushed while visiting Chun-Nan again." Tai deduced "Regardless, those two water panthers must be saved at all costs! The water panther race is too precious for any villainous fiend in Chun-Nan to keep hold of. Matilda, do you wish to save those two water panthers or would you rather Bladefeather and Mushu do it?"

"I'll save them." said Matilda "Especially little Ruben as he's with Sonic the Hedgehog now and if he doesn't get saved then Sonic and his friends will never see him again. Don't worry about me dad, I'll be fine out there. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan doesn't stand a chance against me."

"I know you can beat them dearest." said Tai, kissing his daughter affectionately on the forehead "You be safe out there and save Ruben and Hydra at all costs."

"I will." said Matilda "See you later."

With that said, Matilda left the Pagoda of Prosperity and she ran off to confront the Yīnyǐng Mao clan. Luckily, she still knew the way to their temple so she would find them without any troubles at all. She ran into the bamboo forest and made her way through it and onto the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple. How dare those insidious ninja cats kidnap a pair of water panthers! That was one thought that circled through Matilda's head and she was going to make them pay for daring to kidnap those two water panthers. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan wouldn't know what hit them when she was through with them…

A whole twenty minutes had passed since Ruben and Hydra had been knocked out and kidnapped and now the Yīnyǐng Mao clan had taken them to their temple and chained them up in the dungeons. The two water panthers were dangling off the floor by shackles that were clamped around their wrists and the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas were standing around watching them, waiting for them to wake up so they could taunt them mercilessly and tell them what they were up to. Shang Dao and Zhou Kai admired the captured

water panthers and they grinned maniacally at each other. It gave them great pleasure to see that they had succeeded in capturing two water panthers, especially as one of them was the last of the Hailàng clan, making this catch all the more honouree for them. Emperor Tai would have to answer to their summons now once he found out they had two water panthers in their possession.

"I'm amazed this catch was so easy." said Shang Dao "Although given these water panthers are merely children, it's not that surprising we caught them easily. The one with the purple markings and clothing puts up quite a fight though." he said, glaring at Ruben who was still knocked out.

"He's a member of the Hailàng clan Shang." said Zhou Kai "Those water panthers learned ninjutsu so of course he was going to be able to fight. The one with the green markings though is clearly Zhangcháo material. He cannot fight at all so his capture wasn't so surprising really."

"Makes me wonder why those Zhangcháo idiots formed a clan in the first place if they're not even going to learn martial arts." muttered Shang Dao "It'd make more sense for them to just be a peace gathering group more then anything."

"Hey you two, the water panthers are coming to." said a Yīnyǐng Mao ninja.

The two ninja cats stopped chatting to one another and they looked at their captives. Ruben and Hydra began stirring and waking up. The two water panthers opened their eyes and looked around, wondering where they were. Hydra's vision was a little blurry so he couldn't really see properly and he was in a bit of a funny mood. He had been dreaming and he was somewhat still in it.

"No thanks mother, I'd much rather do more swimming before I go to bed." he slurred stupidly in his sleepy daze.

The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas began wondering what the sleepy water panther was on about. Ruben however was more awake then Hydra and the moment he saw the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas, his eyes snapped open and he began to blurt out in surprise.

"Huh?" he cried "Wha…what? Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas? How did you all get here?"

He then tried to move but he realized that he was hanging off the floor by his arms so all he could do was swing himself back and forth and spin around a little more then anything. He suddenly realized where he and Hydra were.

"Oh no! We're prisoners of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!" shrieked Ruben "Those ninja cats got the best of us!"

"You what?" asked Hydra, waking up properly and snapping out of his sleepy daze "What the bloomin' heck are you talking about Ruben?"

He then looked up at his chained arms and surveyed the dungeon scene he was now in. He also noticed the Yīnyǐng Mao clan glaring at him with cold yellow eyes.

"Oh. That's what." said Hydra.

"You beastly bunch of ninja cats!" yelled Ruben, shaking his chains and raging like mad at the cats "You can't do this to us! Let us down right now or I'll give you all a very cold shower!"

Shang Dao just marched over to Ruben and whacked him in the stomach with his nunchaku. Ruben gasped in pain and he stopped what he was doing. He began panting as he tried to get his breath back and Shang Dao sneered at him.

"Not so mighty now you're a captive aren't you water panther?" sneered Shang Dao "You should had stayed out of Chun-Nan Hailàng survivor and you could have avoided this. But you came back and now you're a captive of ours."

"I can see that." muttered Ruben "I bet you've kidnapped us so you can steal our aqua-collars haven't you? In fact, I bet you feline fiends are the ones who are stealing the aqua-collars of every water panther in Chun-Nan! Go on! Fess up already! I know you're the aqua-collar thieves me and Hydra are looking for!"

Shang Dao and Zhou Kai looked at each other in wonder. What was

that crazy water panther prattling on about? The Yīnyǐng Mao clan weren't much of news people so they didn't really keep up to date with current events in Chun-Nan unless they were interesting ones to them and they knew nothing about the aqua-collar thief.

"What in the name of the ancestors are you gibbering about you crazy little panther?" demanded Zhou Kai "We aren't stealing any aqua-collars! If we were, don't you think we would have removed yours already?"

Ruben and Hydra looked at each other and they could see that either one still had their aqua-collars around their necks, meaning they hadn't been stolen by anyone yet. If the Yīnyǐng Mao clan hadn't removed their collars then that meant they weren't the thieves they were looking for.

"We didn't even know that all the water panthers were having their aqua-collars stolen." said Zhou Kai truthfully "And even if it wasn't happening, we wouldn't ever think of stealing something as worthless as an aqua-collar. Aqua-collars are worth nothing and we only steal stuff that's valuable and worth a lot."

"How do we know you're not lying?" asked Hydra.

"If we were stealing aqua-collars, we would have stolen yours already." said Shang Dao "And if you look all over our temple, you won't find a single solitary collar in the place so you can take us off your suspect list."

"OK, you're all innocent." muttered Ruben, not pleased that he couldn't pin the blame on the Yīnyǐng Mao clan "Now let us go!"

"No little boy, we will not let you go." said Zhou Kai with his teeth gritted and his eyes narrowed into evil slits "You two are needed for our plan."

"Oh boy, let's hear it." muttered Hydra sarcastically "This oughta be REALLY good."

"We'll overlook your sarcastic tone you foolish little water fountain." growled Shang Dao "Anyways, we've kidnapped you to use for a

ransom we're making. You see, we want our leader back but our attempts to break him out have been futile. The guards are too powerful for us ninjas so we've decided to try and get Fong Zarr out with a little exchange. We're going to exchange your freedom for Fong Zarr's freedom in other words and if Emperor Tai doesn't comply to our ransom then you'll end up becoming the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's next supper."

Ruben and Hydra's jaws dropped in unison and they stared at the Yīnyǐng Mao clan in horror. They were being used in a ransom? The Yīnyǐng Mao clan was going to trade them for Fong Zarr's freedom so they could get him out of prison? Ruben knew the Yīnyǐng Mao clan were vile but he didn't think they were THAT vile! Now he and Hydra had to get out of here!

"You evil beasts of nature!" exclaimed Ruben "You can't do this to us! Use us as ransom just so your scornful leader gets out of prison! The emperor won't agree to it! You're making a big mistake you are, thinking that this plan of yours will work!"

"No Ruben, we are not making a mistake." said Zhou Kai with a vampire-esque grin on his furry face "The emperor considers you water panthers sacred you know and will do anything to make sure you all remain safe! He'll cede to our demands faster then you can say "The Five Festivals of Holy Honour"!"

The Yīnyǐng Mao clan erupted in choruses of echoing laughter at their captives, earning a pair of angry glares from Ruben and Hydra as they laughed. After the Yīnyǐng Mao clan had stopped laughing, Shang Dao and Zhou Kai looked back at Ruben and Hydra and they grinned like a pair of cats that have just caught a mouse each for dinner.

"You two had best get comfortable because you're going to be here a while." crooned Zhou Kai "You'd best hope Tai meets our demands so you can get out of here faster."

The Yīnyǐng Mao clan erupted into mocking evil laughter again and they all left the dungeons, leaving the water panthers to dangle off the floor in the dungeons of their temple. The door slammed shut and locked, trapping the water panthers in the dungeon. Now the

two water panthers were alone, Ruben sought to trying to escape from this dark, lonely place. He swung his legs up to his cuffed hands so now he was hanging upside down and he began pulling on his shackles in a desperate attempt to get free.

"I'm not hanging around any longer!" cried Ruben "I'm getting out of here! No one's using me for blackmail! Not even those dirty ninja cats!"

He pulled and pulled on his chains but try as he might, he couldn't break them no matter how hard he pulled. Those chains held Matilda with no effort and she was a million times stronger then Ruben was so he had no chance of escape. All Ruben was doing was wasting his energy and making the chains rattle nosily as he tried to break them. He then tried using his water powers to increase his pulling power and make the strain on the chains harder and harder. He squirted a powerful jet of water at the ceiling and the water pushed on him slightly but not even that was enough to break the chains. All this attempt did was make his wrists feel even sorer then they already were and since the water deflected off the ceiling, he ended up showering Hydra with drops of water. Hydra had had enough of Ruben's futile attempts so he yelled at his friend.

"Oy! Ruben! Give up will ya?" he shouted "You haven't got a chance of getting out of here!"

"No Hydra! I won't give up!" retorted Ruben, still pulling on his chains "I'm not letting us two get used as blackmail so Fong Zarr can get outta prison! He's staying where we belong and we're getting outta here!"

"Ruben, these chains can hold kung-fu masters." muttered Hydra "I should know, mother showed me many kinds of chains and I can recognize the ones that are strong enough to hold a kung-fu master just be feeling them."

Ruben stopped struggling and he lowered himself back down so he was back to dangling off the floor by his arms again. The water panther sighed heavily and he stared down at the floor.

"So we're stuck here then." he murmured "That's just great! We're

never getting outta here!"

"I know." sighed Hydra "I should have stayed at home like a good boy and I wouldn't be in this mess."

"Well you had no idea this was going to happen." said Ruben gently "I had no idea this was gonna happen and yet it did. Oh well, it's not all doom and gloom for us."

"Excuse me?" asked Hydra with a funny face on "Am I losing my wick here or are you actually saying "It's not all doom and gloom for us?"?"

"You heard me correctly Hydra." snapped Ruben "I don't think the Yīnyǐng Mao clan did anything to Li Moon and she'll likely have gone to get the kung-fu masters or Matilda. They'll rescue us."

"Well that's wishful thinking Rubes." said Hydra "But it's good to have hope in a gloomy situation. In fact, I think I'll hope with you. It'll make our time here less glum at least."

So Ruben and Hydra decided to remain still and wait to see what was going to happen next. Ruben prayed as hard as he could that someone was going to rescue him and Hydra from the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's evil claws and stop their plan before it can begin…

Meanwhile, Matilda had arrived at the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple and the mongoose princess took shelter behind a bunch of rocks not far from the temple. She peeked over the rocks and saw the defences the temple had. The entire clan was out on guard patrol with Shang Dao and Zhou Kai leading them. The ninja cats all stood guard around the temple. Some took position on the roof and kept a close look out for intruders. Security had been extra tight since the festival folly plot and the fact Matilda was their most serious threat and the clan was determined not to let anyone get into the temple and ransack their home. Matilda just made a grim face that looked unusual on the usually happy and kind hearted princess.

"Well it seems my obstacles consist of the entire clan being out on

patrol and guarding every door and window of the temple." Matilda analyzed to herself "Fong Zarr is obviously not here as he's in prison and there doesn't seem to be a replacement leader. This won't be so hard. Although it'd be nice if I could settle this peacefully instead of having to beat them up, they deserve what's coming to them. They bring this upon themselves with their dis-honouree ways so for honour and the safety of Ruben and Hydra, I am going to save them and leave the Yīnyǐng Mao clan crying to themselves."

With that said, Matilda decided hiding time was over and she emerged from behind the rock pile. Before beating the tar out of everybody and then saving the water panthers, she decided to see if she could reason with the Yīnyǐng Mao clan first. Given how she had foiled their festival folly plot months ago, there was no reason the Yīnyǐng Mao clan wouldn't be reasonable and wouldn't give into her demands so there was no harm in trying. Matilda took a steady breath and then she marched over to the temple as calmly as she could. The ninja cats all saw her coming and one of the cats on the roof yelled out loud at the top of his voice.

"Intruder alert!" screamed the cat "And it's the princess too!"

The ninja cats all ran over to Matilda and they surrounded her by forming a circle all around her. Matilda stopped in her tracks and she watched the cats all form a ring around her and surrender her on all sides. They all drew out weapons of many kinds including spears, katanas, shuriken, nunchakus, Bo staffs and Sai and the pointed them straight at Matilda. Shang Dao and Zhou Kai stood forward and they both pointed a katana each at Matilda's chest. The princess didn't even flinch at them though, she wasn't scared of those cats at all, especially since she beat them all months ago and was going to do so again now Lord Vharr/Governor Shen, the only one who had a chance against her was gone.

"Raise your hands sweetheart." ordered Shang Dao "And don't try anything foolish or you will feel these katanas through your chest."

Matilda obliged and she raised her hands, pretending to surrender. No way in hell was she going to surrender for real to these jokers. If it was a proper threat then she'd be surrendering for real. Shang Dao grinned wickedly and he lowered his katana. So did Zhou Kai.

"Thank you toots." said Zhou Kai "Now, before we unleash hell on you and throw you in the dungeons, what may I ask is a woman of your stature doing here?"

"I've come here on peaceful terms." lied Matilda "I wish to make a bargain with you."

This just prompted the Yīnyǐng Mao clan to laugh mockingly at her, earning an annoyed glare from the kung-fu princess.

"The high and mighty princess of kung-fu wishes to make a bargain with us?" sneered Zhou Kai "Do you really think we're going to meet any demands of yours after what you've done to us you royal brat?"

"Please, I mean it." said Matilda calmly "I know I've done things to you in the past but, that was in the past and this is now. Now please, hear my bargain."

"Go ahead doll face, we're listening." said Zhou Kai with a maniac grin on his face.

"Please don't call me doll face!" snapped Matilda.

"Whatever you say…babe." snickered Zhou Kai.

He then proceeded to laugh at his bad joke and that just made Matilda groan exasperatedly. She was beginning to lose her patience with these cats. Shang Dao bopped Zhou Kai on the head and made him shut up.

"Don't taunt the stupid princess!" snarled Shang Dao "Do you want her to use us all for stress relief?"

"Oh come on, she's surrounded and out numbered and has hundreds of weapons pointing at her." said Zhou Kai, rubbing his head and grumbling in annoyance "She ain't going anywhere without being skewered or beaten."

Shang Dao just sniffed at his companion and he turned back to Matilda. He pointed his katana at Matilda's throat. The princess gulped slightly but she didn't show much signs of fear.

"Speak your peace already princess." he ordered "And be quick about it, we haven't got all day."

"Please release the water panthers you have in your custody and I won't have to kick all your butts." said Matilda "If you oblige then you can save yourselves an unnecessary beating and I can save myself having to resort to senseless violence."

The Yīnyǐng Mao clan just scoffed at that offer and Shang Dao pointed the katana even closer to Matilda's throat, so close that Matilda could feel the cold steel of the blade under her chin.

"Do you really think we're going to accept that lousy offer?" snickered Shang Dao "We need those water panthers for our plan and if you don't meet our demands then they never get to see daylight again!"

"What are your demands?" asked Matilda curiously.

"Release Fong Zarr from prison and the water panthers go free without a scratch on their bodies." said Zhou Kai "We give you our word of honour."

"No you don't." said Matilda coldly "You Yīnyǐng Mao scum don't even know what the word "honour" means. The only honouree thing to you is power, misery to others and priceless artefacts. I do not accept your proposal."

"Very well then." said Shang Dao "You will join the water panthers in the dungeons and make our ransom EVEN bigger! If those two panthers don't get Tai to cave in to us then his precious daughter will! Shadow Cats! Seize her!"

The Yīnyǐng Mao cats all put their weapons away and they advanced on Matilda menacingly, ready to pounce on her and tie her up so they could deliver her to the dungeons. Matilda just took a deep breath and lowered her arms.

"Don't say I didn't give you a chance to settle this peacefully." she said "After all, you're bringing this on yourselves."

She wasn't pleased her peaceful proposal had failed but she should

have expected this to happen as the Yīnyǐng Mao clan are hard to reason with. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan all lunged at Matilda but the kung-fu princess leaped out of their way, causing them all to crash into each other. Matilda landed outside the circle and the ninja cats all charged towards her. Shang Dao and Zhou Kai launched the first attacks by trying to slice Matilda to ribbons with their katanas. Matilda dodged their attacks and Shang Dao lunged at her with a katana stab but Matilda blocked the blow with her wristbands. She then gut-kicked Shang Dao and made him drop his katana. Matilda grabbed it and ended up having a sword fight with Zhou Kai. She and Zhou Kai clashed weapons and they swiped furiously at each other, trying to slice one another to pieces. Their katanas clashed and Zhou Kai raised his katana high above his head. He tried a downwards chop but Matilda blocked the attack and then, with an amazing katana twirl, actually ended up wrestling the sword out of Zhou Kai's grasp. Zhou Kai looked nervous and he tried to pick his sword up but Matilda pointed the katana at him and made him stop as if to say "Leave it where it is" to him. Zhou Kai surrendered and knelt down on the ground. Matilda picked up his katana and then proceeded to slam the katanas on her thigh and break them both so neither cats could use them. Matilda then got down on one knee, grabbed Zhou Kai by the scruff of his uniform and jammed her face into his face.

"Where are the panthers?" she demanded furiously.

Zhou Kai just stared into Matilda's steely eyes, unable to believe the princess could be so hardcore when in kung-fu mode. Matilda raised her fist menacingly and Zhou Kai squealed like a girl.

"Answer me!" shouted Matilda.

"They're in the dungeons!" squealed Zhou Kai "You'll know they way as you've been in there before! I swear it!"

"Thank you." said Matilda, punching Zhou Kai so hard he knocked the ninja cat clean out.

She got up from her knees and was about to run off to the temple until Shang Dao leaped up and tackled her from the side. He wrestled the princess down onto the ground and tried to keep her

though but Matilda was much, much too strong for him. Matilda effortlessly pushed the ninja cat off of herself and she leaped back onto her feet, swinging her head forwards and walloping him in the face with it. Matilda's head was like a steel ball thanks to her kung-fu training. Shang Dao screamed in pain and he staggered backwards. Matilda then gave him an uppercut that sent him hurling backwards about thirty feet and he landed painfully on his back. The blow seemed to have knocked Shang Dao clean out as after he landed, he just lay there and didn't do anything else. Now those two cats were down for the count, Matilda could rescue the water panthers. First she had to get through the other Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas who were ready and willing to make sure the princess got nowhere near the temple. Not that that was going to be much a problem for her. The group of ninja cats all charged towards Matilda with their weapons at the ready. One ninja cat tried to whack Matilda in the belly with his Bo staff but Matilda leaped over the swinging staff and dropkicked the cat in the face as she came back down. The cat was brought down on his back and Matilda grabbed his Bo staff. Six ninja cats all wielding nunchakus all came running towards Matilda, spinning their nunchakus around and getting ready to beat the living tar out of her. Matilda stuck the Bo staff in the ground, ran around in a circle and began to spin herself around and around on the Bo staff. The ninja cats were stupid enough to get close to her and they all felt the sheer power of Matilda's legs as she swung around and walloped them all the way to Kingdom Valley. The cats all hurled backwards and they landed a very long distance away from Matilda after that attack. Matilda stopped spinning herself around and she stood back up on her feet. A ninja cat wielding a Sai was up next and the cat tried to stab Matilda with it. Matilda prodded the cat sharply in the gut with the Bo staff and the cat doubled over in excruciating pain. Matilda then whacked the cat in the face with the Bo and finished him off with a kung-fu kick to the gut. The cat was down and out for now. However, it seemed Matilda's good luck was going to end there as a ninja cat pounced on her from behind and wrapped his arms around her neck. He had a katana in his hand and he held the bald close to Matilda's throat. But Matilda had been trained to get out of things like this so this was no problem for her. Matilda grabbed the cat's arm and pushed the katana away from her throat. She then slipped out of that cat's grip and elbowed him in the gut. The cat doubled over and gasped and Matilda fist-slammed him on

the back of his head, knocking him out in one blow. One cat wielding shuriken threw some shuriken at Matilda but Matilda just caught the shuriken and threw them away and gave the shuriken cat an uppercut to the chin. Another cat pounced on her from behind and dropkicked the princess in the back. Matilda was brought down on her stomach and the cats all ran towards her. They jumped on top of Matilda and began pinning her down so she couldn't get back up. The ninja cats formed a pile on top of the kung-fu mongoose but not even that was enough to keep our brave little princess down. Matilda managed to wrestle everybody off of her self and the cats were sent sprawling everywhere. Matilda got back to her feet and dusted herself off. One cat tried to get the drop on her from behind but she just raised her arm and punched it without even turning around. The cat was knocked out and it fell down onto its back. All the other cats in the Yīnyǐng Mao clan knew too well that Matilda was too powerful for them so they retreated back into the temple. Matilda smiled brightly to herself, pleased that she'd gotten through the enemy yet again.

"Yīnyǐng Mao scum, they maybe devious but they're not very bright." she said to herself "You'd think that after I foiled their festival folly and assassination plot that I'm too powerful for them and should be avoided at all costs. Oh well, hopefully I've knocked some sense into these insidious shadow cats and now they're beaten, I can rescue the water panthers."

With that said, Matilda walked on into the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple, leaving the defeated ninja cats to lie around and wonder which parts of them to rub better. Now Matilda was in the temple, she ran through the corridors and headed for the dungeons. As she had been a prisoner of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan briefly, she knew where the dungeons were so she had no trouble finding them. In no time at all, Matilda found the dungeons and she skidded to a halt straight in front of the door which had been repaired from the time she broke it. Now she was going to break it again. Matilda cracked her knuckles and prepared to bust the door down.

"And to think I was in there breaking out at some point last year and now I'm out here breaking in." said Matilda "I think I prefer the latter as I'm saving prisoners instead of being one and having to save

myself."

Matilda drew her arms back as far as she could and then she busted the doors down with one mighty punch. Ruben and Hydra were so surprised at the fact the doors just got busted down that they almost jumped out of their fur. They quickly changed from surprised to excited when they realized that the person breaking the doors down was none other then Princess Matilda. Matilda strolled into the dungeon and the water panthers almost lost their minds with relief.

"Matilda!" cried Ruben "You've come to get us outta here! I knew someone was going to save us!"

"Of all the people to come and save us, I wasn't expecting the princess though." said Hydra happily "But I'm glad it is! We're outta here now!"

Matilda beamed with pride and she marched over to the chained up water panthers. She then give their shackles and swift chop and the shackles were sliced open, freeing Ruben and Hydra from their grasps and the two water panthers fell down to the floor. Hydra rubbed his sore wrists tenderly whereas Ruben was too overwhelmed with happiness to feel sore anywhere on his body. He ran over to Matilda and threw his arms around her. Matilda giggled and she hugged him back.

"Oh it's so good to see you again princess!" said Ruben happily.

"Welcome back to Chun-Nan Ruben." said Matilda "Pity this had to happen to you."

"It doesn't matter now you've come to rescue us." said Ruben "Now we're free, let's break for it before those ninja cats get grumpy with us."

"Don't expect anything from those shadow cats Ruben." said Matilda, breaking up the hug "They're all battered and beaten and lying outside their temple wondering what hit them."

"Core!" exclaimed Hydra "You're a beast you are Matilda! You beat up all those Yīnyǐng Mao cats and made it out with hardly a scratch

on ya! You are officially the most awesome woman in Chun-Nan!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh stop it Hydra, you're making me blush." giggled Matilda, a small blush actually appearing on her cheeks.

"I mean it though!" laughed Hydra "No woman in Chun-Nan compares to your skill princess! Mother could learn a thing or two from you she could!"

"Hydra, the Bride of the Peaceful Earth is entitled to her way of life and I will not interfere with it for your pleasure." said Matilda sternly "It's dis-honouree to interfere with people's lives and try to force them to endorse your way of life instead of letting them choose their own path."

"OK." sighed Hydra in annoyance "Killjoy!" he muttered under his breath.

Matilda just promptly smacked Hydra on the cheek for that cheeky remark of his.

"Come on you two, let's get going already." said Matilda "I can't stand to be in this hideous temple a minute longer."

With that said, Matilda, Ruben and Hydra ran out of the dungeons and they headed to the temple entrance. They ran out of the temple as fast as they could and they left the battered and beaten Yīnyǐng Mao clan behind and ran off into the distance. The moment they left though, Shang Dao and Zhou Kai had come to and they got back to their feet. They began rubbing themselves all over and they grumbled to themselves.

"Stupid kung-fu princess." murmured Shang Dao "She beat us all."

"I'll say she has, look at our troops." said Zhou Kai, motioning to the battered and beaten Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas that lay on the ground all around the temple ground "They've all been beaten to a pulp by her!"

"I bet she's gone and saved the water panthers too." muttered Shang Dao "I guess we'll have to change our plan then. If a ransom won't work then we will have to try and break Fong Zarr out yet

again."

"But Shang, we've tried that a good few times already." noted Zhou Kai "And we've failed every time. How can this plan possibly work now?"

"We'll try and be sneakier then the other times we've tried and we'll have distractions to keep the guards busy." explained Shang Dao "Our troops will be the distractions and we'll get Fong Zarr out ourselves. If we die trying to get him out then so be it. I'm not resting until our leader is back in our clan where he belongs."

"Well I'm with you all the way old friend." said Zhou Kai "Fong Zarr will taste freedom and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan can get ever closer to power at last!"

With that said, the two shadow cats began laughing to themselves as they pictured themselves breaking Fong Zarr out of prison and getting him back in the Yīnyǐng Mao clan at long last…

Footnotes:

*** Niújiǎo means "horns" in Chinese**

Well looks like those shadowy ninja cats are gonna have to try something different if they want to get their leader out! Will they succeed? And will Ruben, Hydra and Matilda find the aqua-collar thief? Maybe they will as the thief is revealed next time! Stay tuned! Reviews are welcome.

Ha PROJECT 1-21-18-9-1-19 ! You thought the thief was obvious didn't you? Well it isn't! The thief is someone you'll NEVER guess! Ha, ha, ha!

To TailslovesCosmo: I HAVE seen Sonic X (and I love it!) and I love Cosmo the Seedrian as much as any Cosmo fan does. I think me and you just have a different understanding of the character that's all. I apologize for my harsh review by the way,

I didn't mean it to turn out like that. Next time I'll be a bit more civil in my reviews.

The Water Panther Plunder 3

Arc 12: The Water Panther Plunder

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 95-97

Part 3: The Thief Revealed

Princess Matilda and the two water panthers Ruben and Hydra continued running away from the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's temple. Matilda had just broken into the temple and saved the two water panthers from the grasp of the shadowy ninja cats and now they were all fleeing from the temple. The three had run a considerably good distance away before they finally came to a halt in a thickly grown bamboo forest in the middle of nowhere. The forest would hide them well from anyone looking for them due to how thick it was, not that they were hiding anyway. Now they had stopped, they settled down to rest and Matilda decided to have a talk with the water panthers. They all settled down against a bamboo tree and rested for a minute.

"Thanks for saving our skins in there princess." said Ruben gratefully.

"You're welcome Ruben." said Matilda brightly "You don't have to call me princess all the time by the way, you can just call me Matilda."

"OK." said Ruben "It's so good to see you again though Matilda."

"It's good to see you too Ruben." said Matilda happily "So how's life with the legendary Sonic the Hedgehog been for you?"

"It's been great." said Ruben "I get to use my water powers to help fight Dr. Eggman and I've been on many adventures with Sonic. One of the most honouree things that's happened to me though was when I helped Sonic, Tails and Bunnie de-roboticize everybody after Eggman roboticized all of Mobius*."

"I still remember that day." said Matilda with a shudder "All of Chun-Nan were robots, me included and my mind heaves just thinking about it. The moment we were all de-roboticized, the first thing I thought was "I bet the heroes from the west did this" and since you've confirmed it to me, it turns out I was right."

"Just the fact I was responsible for the saving of the entire planet is more then honouree enough for me." said Ruben "I don't think I'll ever do something so honouree again although time will tell when that might happen again."

"You're right on that Ruben." said Matilda agreeably "My master always said to me "Time is the most unpredictable force of nature as it can throw things at you at the most unexpected moments and whether they are good or bad depends on the moods of time". So, what were you two doing that ended up getting you captured by those awful shadow cats?" she asked.

"We were looking for the aqua-collar thief toots." said Hydra.

"Aqua-collar thief?" said Matilda "Oh yeah, I know what you mean. Someone's been swiping the water panther's aqua-collars and leaving them unable to use their trademark water powers. I can't begin to tell you how horrible I think this is. Stealing aqua-collars from the water panthers before they can be blessed with permanent powers by their leaders so now they have no water powers. Dad's been hoping dearly that the thief will be found. He's doing the best he can but unfortunately, we're not getting any results."

"This thief really must be sneaky then." muttered Hydra "Anyhow, we met up with your friend Li Moon and she reckons she saw the thief only she couldn't quite make it out so her guesses are as good as ours and then two Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas come out of nowhere and kidnap us! That's how we got caught by the way and now you've saved us, we can get back to the search."

"On your search before you got kidnapped, did you find anything out?" wondered Matilda.

"Well Li Moon thinks the thief is vaguely cat like." explained Ruben "And the Yīnyǐng Mao clan told us themselves they're not

responsible for the theft of the aqua-collars, they're trying to break Fong Zarr out of prison so the collars aren't going to be of interest to them."

"Well this is unusual, the Yīnyǐng Mao clan are innocent for once." said Matilda in surprise "But that still doesn't excuse them for trying to use you two for ransom. No doubt that now I've saved you both they'll be making a change of plan and if they are then I'll be ready to ruin it again."

"I bet you are." said Ruben "But the Yīnyǐng Mao clan isn't of our concern right now. The aqua-collar thief is. Now we're free, we can rule the Yīnyǐng Mao clan out as innocent and get back to our search for the thief."

"You know what Ruben? To provide extra help for you and to make sure you don't get captured again," suggested Matilda "I think I'll join in on this search. My dad's striving to find out who the thief is and if I help you two find the thief, I'll be honouring my dad as well as the water panther race."

Ruben and Hydra looked at each other and thought over this tempting offer. Matilda was stronger then both of them put together and she was a kung-fu warrior somewhere between master and expert stage so she was going to provide great protection for them on this search. There was no reason why the princess shouldn't join in on this mission of theirs at all.

"Matilda, we think that's a swell idea." said Hydra "You're coming with us princess."

"Thank you." said Matilda with a happy smile "I'm glad you're letting me join you on this."

"Think of it as a token of our gratitude your grace." said Ruben politely "Now, were do we start? The village didn't seem to be giving us much help and the help we did get was vague at best. What direction should we possibly go in from here?"

"Beats me Rubes." said Hydra, shrugging his arms "I have no idea where to go either."

"I have a suggestion." Matilda said suddenly "Maybe we could ask any of the water panther clans and see if they can give us any clues on who the thief is. I'm sure at least one of the clans has seen the thief in action."

"Don't ask my clan your royal highness." said Hydra quickly "They haven't seen the thief in action, me included. We were robbed in our sleep, all of us."

"OK, I won't ask the Zhangcháo clan then." said Matilda "I know one clan that's near here though. The Tsunami Clan. We'll go to them first as they're the closest water panther clan to us. I hope they can give us some clues on the thief's identity."

"Hydra's clan may have been robbed in their sleep but that doesn't mean the other water panthers were." added Ruben agreeably "There are thirteen water panther clans that have all been robber, I bet at least one member from any of the water panther clans must have seen the thief in action. If not then we're really stuck on the thief's identity."

"Well let's not waste anymore time." said Matilda, standing up and straightening her radiant purple dress out "Let's go and visit the Tsunami clan and see if they know anything about the thief's identity."

Ruben was up and eager to go as he was desperate to catch the thief and return all the aqua-collars back to the water panthers. He got up onto his feet and so did Hydra. The three Mobians all left the bamboo forest and headed off to meet the Tsunami clan, a clan of water panthers that shared the same lifestyle as the Zhangcháo clan, a peace gathering group although they were a little harsher then the Zhangcháo clan in behaviour and reputation. Matilda knew where that clan was stationed so she led the way with Ruben and Hydra following. Ruben knew about the Tsunami clan in reputation but he had never met the clan in person so this visit was going to be interesting to him. Hopefully when they met the clan, the clan would know something about the thief and the clan would be able to give them so ideas on who to look for on this imperative search…

An hour passed since the trek to the Tsunami clan's territory had begun and the three Mobians were almost there. They had to cross through a large barren wasteland of plain grounds and surrounding giant rocks and they would be there at last. The wasteland was littered with skeletons, bones and rotting carcasses of unfortunate Mobians who have either been killed by something that lives here or of malnutrition. The very sight of these made Ruben shudder and feel uneasy all over. He hated the sight of death, just seeing bones made him feel sick or frightened and this wasteland was not a flattering sight to him at all. But his ambition to find the thief was too great for his hatred of dead bodies to get in the way. Ruben decided to just ignore the carcasses that littered the wasteland. Matilda didn't seem that flattered by the sight of death either but she didn't let it bother her as she was a dedicated woman who didn't let anything bother her during missions. It was going to take more then a carcass to bother her. As for Hydra, he wasn't bothered by the bones all over the wasteland at all. The only thing he was bothered about was the fact his feet were killing him. They had been walking for an hour non-stop and Hydra didn't know martial arts of any kind and knowing martial arts gave you much more stamina and you can go for much longer without getting tired so Hydra wasn't as durable as Matilda and Ruben. Those two could go on for a while but not him. He needed a rest and he needed it now.

"Hey princess, hey Ruben." moaned Hydra "We've been wondering about for hours. How about resting the legs?"

"But Hydra, we're almost there according to Matilda." said Ruben "Can't you keep it up for a little while longer?"

"We've been bloomin' walking for a whole hour without stopping for crying out loud!" shrieked Hydra angrily "And I'm not as durable as you two because I don't known martial arts so I can't go as long as you two can!"

"I can see you're tired Hydra but surely you can keep it up for a little longer." said Ruben "We might only be ten minutes at most."

"Ruben, poor Hydra's pooped." said Matilda affectionately "He can't keep it up much longer. I have a solution that'll please us all though."

With that said, Matilda bent down and held her arms out backwards. Hydra could see what Matilda was thinking so he climbed onto Matilda's back and gripped her shoulders. Matilda wrapped her arms around Hydra's legs and she stood up with the water panther clinging onto her back. Matilda was giving Hydra a piggyback ride. Hydra could rest his legs and she and Ruben wouldn't have to stop and wait for him to rest up. Now they could go on through the wasteland and onto the Tsunami clan's territory without a stop.

"Aw sweet!" cried Hydra "I get a piggyback ride on the world's most awesome woman! Can this day get any better?"

Matilda blushed at Hydra's remark, clearly flattered at the fact the young water panther though so highly of her.

"Hydra please…I'm not that awesome…" said Matilda modestly "I mean, I know that I'm a kung-fu warrior but I don't think that makes me the world's most awesome woman. I'm sure there have been other women who know kung-fu and are better then me."

"Not in my eyes." said Hydra "I think you're the world's most awesome woman."

Matilda just blushed even harder. Who knew such a young water panther could be so charming? Even though it was clear he was just trying to get into her good books because she was a princess, Matilda still couldn't help but be flattered by the water panther's comments.

"I like your idea Matilda." said Ruben "Hydra gets to rest and we don't have to rest. Good thinking Matilda."

"Thanks Ruben." said Matilda graciously "I'll be glad when we get out of this wasteland though, this place is giving me the creeps. The sight of death everywhere is unsettling to me."

"Same here." said Ruben as he walked past what appeared to be a bird's skull "I'm beginning to wonder what happened to all these people who went through here? Did something kill them or did they just die of thirst or hunger? And if they were killed by something then what possibly lives here?"

"I dunno." said Hydra "I don't think many things live in a wasteland so maybe they weren't killed by something, maybe it was just the weather that got the best of them."

"Maybe it was." said Matilda "Funny enough though, I have a feeling I know this place. There's something familiar about it…but I can't quite put my finger on it."

"Well since you've met the Tsunami clan, you will have been through here before." noted Ruben "So the wasteland will look familiar to you."

"I know." said Matilda "But there's something else that's familiar to me but I can't quite work out what it is."

Just as she finished her sentence though, the sound of rocks moving rung out suddenly from the sides of the wasteland. Matilda and Ruben stopped dead in their tracks and they looked around wondering what the noise was and where it came from.

"What's up?" asked Hydra "You're both getting tired now?"

"I heard something." said Ruben "It sounded like rocks moving and I'm wondering what it was."

"Maybe it was just some loose rocks falling down the bigger rocks." suggested Matilda.

Then suddenly, another strange noise was heard and that made Ruben and Matilda stand up straight. It was the sound of something pushing through rocks and plodding through the rocky scenery around them. There was definitely something in this wasteland and it was on the prowl for something. Matilda put Hydra down and took a nervous look around for any sign of danger. Her stomach was beginning to tighten in worry.

"I don't think we're alone here." said Matilda quietly.

"It sounds like there's something else around here." said Ruben "Is it an enemy ninja that's stalking us? Or maybe the Yīnyǐng Mao clan have followed us here and are attempting to recapture me and Hydra?"

"Whatever it is, I don't know but I am going to find out." said Matilda "Wait here while I investigate."

She slunk off and headed towards the surrounding rock hills on the sides of the wasteland. Ruben and Hydra stayed put and they waited to see what was going to happen next and what Matilda was going to find. Matilda crept nervously over to the rock hills and she began to scan the terrain. Everything seemed clear so far. There didn't appear to be anything out of the ordinary. Maybe the Mobians were just hearing things or it was a hiker trekking through the rock hills. Matilda looked around and deduced that everything was fine and there was nothing to worry about. Then suddenly, a large rock that sat inside a large crevasse shifted position and rolled down the hill. Matilda watched the rolling rock and knew that there was definitely something here. Matilda began to climb up the rocks and she peered into a large crevasse in the rock.

"Hello?" she asked "Is somebody in there? Hello? Please come out if there's anybody in there. It's not safe to play in crevasses."

She received no reply. There didn't seem to be anybody about. If that was the case then what was moving the rocks? Something did not add up here. Matilda peeked even closer into the crevasse. Then suddenly, something lunged out at her and whacked her in the face. Matilda was sent hurling backwards from the crevasse and she came crashing down onto her back. She skidded across the ground and came to a halt a good few feet away from the rock hill. Ruben and Hydra both stared in horror at Matilda and they ran over to help her up. Matilda rubbed her throbbing face and she picked herself up just as the water panthers ran up to her. The poor mongoose felt like she'd been battered by a nunchaku after that attack.

"Ouch!" she winced "What was that that just hit me?"

"I dunno but it packs quite a punch!" cried Hydra "There must be some martial arts person hiding in there!"

But it wasn't a martial arts person of any kind. The thing that had just attacked Matilda came out of the darkness of the crevasse and into the bright sunlight of the outside world, snarling menacingly. The thing that had attacked Matilda was a Mobian panda. Mobian

pandas were just like Earth pandas, big round bears with black and white fur, but they wore gold and red armour pieces around their torsos that gleamed in the sunlight. The panda's eyes were plain yellow in colour and had no pupils at all. It was huge and looked very savage. Mobian pandas were savage animals that killed anything they could get their massive paws on and this panda looked especially grumpy to have intruders in its territory. It bared its ferocious teeth and growled menacingly at the Mobians. Matilda, Ruben and Hydra all jumped in alarm and they stepped back from the snarling beast.

"A panda!" shrieked Ruben "A real live panda! I can't believe my eyes!"

"Neither can I!" exclaimed Hydra "How unlucky are we to come across a blinkin' panda? These guys are the most savage monsters in all of Chun-Nan!"

"I think I know where we are now!" blurted Matilda "This is the Land of the Pandas! A forbidden land where nobody who walks through it makes it out alive!"

"Then how come you did?" asked Hydra "You've met the Tsunami clan before and gone through here to see them and yet no panda's ripped you apart!"

"I must have been lucky I guess." muttered Matilda "The pandas must have been sleeping the time I've walked through this wasteland. When I first arrived at the Tsunami clan's territory, they were quick to inform me that this is panda territory and you have to go around the wasteland, not through it, in order to avoid them. I can't believe I ended up forgetting that though."

"We all make mistakes Matilda, even the greatest of kung-fu warriors." said Ruben "Now let's scraper before that thing kills us!"

The panda roared at the top of its voice and it lumbered over to the Mobians with its teeth bared and saliva streaming out of its gaping jaws. Pandas were fast creatures but no quite fast enough to catch a kung-fu warrior so Matilda could get away from it easily. The panda lunged forward with a terrific punch but Matilda, Ruben and Hydra

jumped out of its way, leaving it to punch the ground instead. Instead of running for her life though, Matilda ran back over to the panda and began holding her arms out. The panda glowered at her and reared up on its back legs to its full height while roaring menacingly. Matilda didn't let that bother her and she began trying to tame the panda.

"Whoa, whoa there boy. Easy, easy, steady boy!" cried Matilda, trying to get the panda to calm down "Take it easy there little panda, we mean you no harm!"

But Mobian Pandas were not creatures that could be reasoned with. They only had one thing on their minds: kill anything that invades their territory. Matilda's efforts to tame the beast were all in vain. The panda bellowed at Matilda and swatted her with an enormous arm. The kung-fu princess was sent hurling across the wasteland like a rag doll and she landed painfully on her shoulder. She winced in pain and clutched her throbbing arm. Mobian Pandas were not only extremely savage but they were also very strong too. Their strength rivalled that of even a kung-fu master although they were not skilled in kung-fu themselves so they had strength but no skill so the kung-fu masters were better off then they were. Matilda was just about to get back up until the panda pounced on her and began to viciously attack her. It had its enormous canines bared and its claws were unsheathed. It tried to rip Matilda apart but the terrified mongoose was squirming like crazy under the huge bulk of the panda so the panda couldn't get a very clear shot of her. She also pressed her hands against the panda's arms to keep its claws away from her but the panda was not giving up so easily. It was going to have a mongoose snack and nothing was going to make it back down. The panda snapped its ferocious jaws at Matilda and tried to bite her face. Matilda just kept up keeping the panda's killer tools away from her. Her heart was pounding so furiously she though it was going to burst as the panda tried and tried it's hardest to get her.

"You're not having me for lunch!" screamed Matilda as the panda snapped its jaws at her again "Now please get off me!"

The panda refused to move. It just kept trying and trying to get the squirming mongoose and kill her. Matilda could see that this panda was not going to back down anytime soon so she had no choice but

to fight the savage monster. Matilda rose her legs up into the panda's stomach and then, using the strength invested in her as a kung-fu warrior, she pushed the mighty panda off herself. The panda was knocked off of Matilda and sent sprawling onto its back. Matilda picked herself up and dusted herself off. The panda picked itself back up and lumbered towards Matilda again but Ruben and Hydra both let the panda have it with an enormous jet of water. The panda was quickly drenched by their attacks and the power of their water jets knocked it onto its side. Ruben and Hydra stopped squirting the panda and they stood by as the beast picked itself up and shook itself dry.

"Dare touch the princess and you get a water panther style thrashing!" yelled Ruben bravely.

"I second that!" said Hydra.

The panda just glowered at the water panthers with its blank yellow eyes. But it didn't launch another attack. It reared up onto its hind legs, looked up at the sky and roared a powerful, mighty roar that echoed around the wasteland. The Mobians braced themselves, wondering what was happening.

"What's it doing?" asked Ruben "Is it just getting mad at us?"

"No." said Matilda, panting heavily "I think…that's its call for help. It's calling its friends out to come and get us!"

Unfortunately, Matilda was right. The panda's roar was a signal for the other pandas to come out of hiding and help it kill the intruders. The panda they were fighting was the ring leader and he was always the first one out when it came to a kill. It mostly called its friends out when they were eating a kill but in desperate situations, it called its friends out to help it with the killing. No sooner had the giant beast roared up to the sky; more pandas came out of their hiding places and lumbered down to the wasteland to deal with the intruders. All these pandas wore armoured pieces around their torsos but it wasn't as bright and shiny as the lead panda's and they all looked equally as vicious. Some pandas had battle scars on their faces and snouts and some had ripped ears or were missing an eye. It's quite clear that these pandas had been in many conflicts and the victors had

always been them thanks to their brutality and savage nature. The lead panda's lips curled up into what looked like an evil smirk as if to say "Think you can take on all of us?" and it commanded the other pandas to surround the Mobians with a wave of the paw and a grunt that sounded like a command of some kind. The pandas understood what he meant and they formed a circle around Matilda, Ruben and Hydra. They all unsheathed their claws, gnashed their teeth and made them tremble with an ominous growl. Matilda just bent down in a battle ready stance and prepared to fight. Ruben and Hydra could see they were needing to fight too so they prepared to battle along with Matilda.

"I'm sorry that I'm going to have to do this pandas." said Matilda in a stern tone "But you're leaving me with no choice. You'll only end up wishing you hadn't decided to attack the Princess of Chun-Nan."

The lead panda just snorted at her and ordered it's minions to attack. The pandas all closed in on the Mobians but Matilda grabbed the water panthers and did an amazing somersault into the air out of the circle of pandas and onto the ground a few feet away from them. She put the water panthers down and ran forward to attack the lead panda. The lead panda reared up and swatted the princess in the face, knocking her down onto her side again. Getting hit like a panda was like getting hit by a big heavy chain. Matilda clutched her face and grimaced in pain. The lead panda ordered two other pandas to come with it and the three pandas lumbered towards Matilda. Matilda picked herself up and gave one of the pandas a terrific uppercut that sent it hurling through the air and crashing heavily down on the ground. The lead panda swiped at her but Matilda bent over backwards and dodged the attack. She then swung herself forward and head butted the panda in the face. The lead panda staggered backwards and clutched its throbbing nose. Matilda didn't stop there though as when fighting a panda, you must never give it chance to fight back or it will kill you. She leaped in and kung-fu kicked the panda in the gut. Then she roundhouse punched it in the jaws, face and cranium. She clasped her fists together and fist-slammed the panda on the head, knocking it down onto its stomach and then she kicked the panda as hard as she could, sending it rolling across the ground. The lead panda groaned a low growl of pain as it wondered what had just hit it. Matilda was about to finish it

off until one of its helpers sneaked up behind her and walloped her in the back of her head with a vicious backhand. Matilda was thrown down onto her hands and knees and her head was aching like mad from that attack. She felt like her head was going to explode. She staggered wobbly back onto her feet but the panda roundhouse punched her and sent her staggering. Then it gave her an uppercut to the chin and a gut punch to the stomach. Matilda double over, wheezing in pain and the panda then backhanded her across the wasteland. The kung-fu princess landed with awkwardly on an old skeleton and she crushed it after landing on it. Matilda winced in pain and tried to fight the pain in her body. She had no idea that pandas could be so strong. They were definitely more of a challenge then the Yīnyǐng Mao clan that's for sure! In fact, she begin betting to herself that if the Yīnyǐng Mao clan fought these pandas, the pandas would probably win, provided they didn't get killed by their katanas or other sharp weapons that is. If only she had a weapon of some kind on her and maybe she could make the pandas back off with it. But unfortunately, there was just her and she had to beat the pandas into submission. The lead panda and its two helpers advanced on Matilda with saliva dripping down their lips and their teeth bared. The lead panda reared up and roared at the top of its voice, giving Matilda the perfect opportunity to leap up and kick it in the gut and send it flying backwards across the wasteland. The other two pandas were livid and they lunged for Matilda but Matilda leaped up and split-kicked them both in the face. The pandas clutched their throbbing faces and Matilda grabbed one of them by its thick fur. She then proceeded to hoist the panda off the ground and above her head with ease and then slam it down on the other panda. The two pandas lay on top of one another and Matilda punched them both, sending them hurling backwards and rolling over one another. The lead panda charged back into the fight and tried to punch Matilda but Matilda leaped out of its way and dropkicked it in the shoulder. Then Matilda pounced on the panda and pinned it down but the panda threw her off itself and picked itself up. It lunged at Matilda with a powerful punch and Matilda lunged back at it with another powerful punch. Their fists hit each other but not one punch was stronger then the other. Their punches were evenly matched so they would have to attack again, this time with a different attack to see if they could gain the upper hand on one another.

As for Ruben and Hydra, they were more having a water fight with the savage pandas then actually fighting them. Whenever the pandas got too close to them, the water panthers squirted them away with a jet of water that sent them sprawling across the landscape. Their water powers were strong after all and big lumbering pandas were no problem for them. One panda ran up behind Ruben and tried to attack him but Ruben turned around and let the panda have it directly in the face with a jet of water. This panda wasn't very fond of getting wet so after getting drenched by Ruben, it ran off as quickly as it could. Ruben laughed at the fleeing panda but his victory was short-lived as another panda ran up behind Ruben and clouted him as hard as it could. Ruben was sent hurling across the wasteland and he crashed down awkwardly on his face. Ruben winced and grunted as he felt pain flood through his face and he tried to pick himself up. The attack had left him a little shaken so he was finding it hard to do so. The panda lumbered hungrily towards Ruben, eager to rip him apart and eat him for supper but Hydra let the panda have it with a huge jet of water that sent the panda flying across the wasteland. The panda landed on its side and bounced off the ground as if it was some giant fury beach ball. It landed on its side and bounced again and again until it came to a stop on its stomach, groaning in pain and wondering what had hit it. Hydra ran over to Ruben and helped him up onto his feet.

"Thanks for the save Hydra." said Ruben, dusting himself off.

"No probs Ruben." said Hydra "I'm not letting one of my little buddies become panda chow. Let's keep up the water squirting, they'll give up eventually."

Hydra was right on that one, pandas did give up eventually once they learnt their attacks were too powerful but you had to keep your fight up for a while before they would retreat. Two pandas came charging up to Ruben and Hydra but the two water panthers both stood together side by side and blasted them with a jet of water that soaked the pandas and knocked them down onto the ground. The two water panthers laughed at the pandas.

"It's a good thing the aqua-collar thief didn't steal our collars!" chuckled Ruben "Or we would be dead out here!"

"We sure would be!" agreed Hydra as he blasted another panda away with his powers "Proves how lucky we are!"

Ruben nodded agreeably and he and Hydra continued to squirt the pandas with water and knock them down. Any pandas that didn't like water instantly retreated after being soaked whereas the others just played harder to beat and kept going but Ruben and Hydra were determined to bring the pandas down so they could escape this barren wasteland with their lives.

As for Matilda and the three pandas she was engaged with, she was beginning to gain an edge on the attacking panda bears. True they managed to get some hard shots on her but her attacks were harder and stronger due to the fact she was almost at the expert stage and she knew martial arts whereas the pandas only knew brute strength so she was the better fighter. The lead panda socked Matilda in the face with a powerful punch but Matilda socked it back in the gut. The panda doubled over and made a growling wheezy sound. Matilda then proceeded to grab the panda by its arm and flip it over onto its back, making sure that the slam was good and hard to add insult to injury. However, one of the lead panda's helpers grabbed Matilda and hoisted her above his head. It was about to slam Matilda down onto the ground until Matilda kicked it on the nose and made the panda drop her. The panda dropped Matilda and the kung-fu princess rammed it as hard as she could with her shoulder. The other panda helper struck Matilda from behind with a clawed paw and left some heavy scratches on Matilda's back. Matilda screamed in pain and the other panda batted her across the face. Then before Matilda could even fight back, the two panda helpers piled on top of her and pinned her down onto the ground. Matilda squirmed furiously underneath them as they tried to keep her down so they could kill her. The pandas opened the jaws and prepared to bite Matilda but Matilda managed to wrestle her arms free from their paws and she socked them both in the chins. She then managed to wrestle herself out from under the pandas and she bashed their heads together. The two pandas lay on the ground dazed and confused from that attack. Now those two were dealt with, Matilda could deal with just the lead panda. The lead panda pounced on Matilda and grasped the mongoose in a big bear hug in an attempt to suffocate her. If it squeezed hard enough, Matilda's breath would

give out and she'd be dead. Matilda choked and spluttered as she felt the air in her lungs depleting and she wrestled her way out of the grasp of the panda. She rammed it in the gut and then gave it an uppercut to the chin. The lead panda's response was to elbow her in the gut and roundhouse punch her in the face. It then slashed Matilda across the face, leaving some rather large, bloody cuts on her beautiful face. Matilda screamed in pain and began to wipe the blood away. This gave the panda more then enough time to elbow thrust Matilda as hard as it could and send her flying into the rocky hills around the wasteland. Matilda hit the hard rock and gasped as she felt her spine crack in several places. If she wasn't a kung-fu warrior, that attack would have hurt so much more. When you know martial arts, you deal with pain a lot better. Matilda staggered away from the rocky hills and ran back into the battle. The panda swiped at her but Matilda leaped over it in one big graceful leap. She dropkicked it in the head as she sailed over and then added another kick just after she landed on her feet behind the panda. The panda was knocked down onto its stomach and Matilda then wrapped her arms around its big, bulky neck. The panda roared furiously and began to flail about madly while Matilda fought hard against the panda and held on tight. It was going to be hard for even a panda to make Matilda let go. The panda furiously flailed about and rammed itself against the wall in a vain attempt to get Matilda off. Matilda fought the pain in her back and held on ever tighter. She then wrestled the panda around and rammed its face into the wall. The panda roared in agony and Matilda began to tighten her grip. The panda began to pull on tighter while roaring viciously but Matilda kept hold of its neck and then, using all the strength she had left, she yanked the panda's head backwards very sharply and a sickening crack sound was heard. Matilda had just broken the panda's neck. The leader of the pandas was dead. Matilda let go of the panda and the panda slumped down on the ground, dead as a doornail. Matilda gasped and panted, clearly worn out from the fight but she was triumphant at least.

"I'm so sorry for this." she said to the dead panda, wiping away some blood that trickled down the cuts on her face "But you brought this on yourself. It was a case of "kill or be killed" and had you listened to me, you could have avoided this unnecessary death that you've brought upon yourself."

As you can see, Matilda was not fond of killing and she wasn't pleased that she had to resort to slaughtering a panda just to save herself. But it had to be done and Matilda knew that very well so she didn't let it get to her. Not to mention that she was a princess and next in line to the throne of Chun-Nan and if she got killed, she wouldn't get a chance to rule in her father's stead and there would have to be a replacement for her when Tai's time was up so she had to kill the panda to save herself. As for the other pandas, they had heard the crack sound and looked at their leader in horror. Their leader was dead and Matilda had killed him. That meant she was too dangerous for them and in order to save their big bulky hides, they had to retreat and let her live. Despite their savage nature, pandas respected those who could beat them and should they see Matilda again, they'll remember that she'd killed their leader and they will never bother her again. The pandas all fled for their lives, desperate to get away from the killer mongoose that had just killed their leader. They all disappeared into the deep dark crevasses in the rocky hills around the wastelands. They were going to lay low and wait until there was someone else to kill. Ruben and Hydra smirked at the retreating pandas and Hydra began taunting them.

"Ha, ha, ha! Nyah, Nyah! Go run away and hide in your stink holes you stupid, cowardly beasts!" jeered Hydra "You must be right scardey cats if you're afraid of two measly water panthers!"

"They're not afraid of us Hydra you nelly!" snapped Ruben "They're scared of Matilda! She's just killed their leader!"

"She bloomin' what?" shrieked Hydra.

The two water panthers ran over to meet Matilda, who was struggling to remain standing and was panting heavily while rubbing her arms better. Ruben and Hydra observed the dead panda leader and it didn't take them long to figure out how exactly Matilda had managed to kill the panda.

"Holy waterfalls!" cried Hydra "You broke the panda's neck! Now that officially means you're the most awesome woman in the world!"

"Killing a panda does not make me awesome Hydra." muttered Matilda "It makes me a horrible little brute. And I'm not pleased with

myself for having to kill the poor creature. I only did it because I had to."

"Well at least we're safe now." said Ruben "Now can we go on to the Tsunami clan?"

"Yes Ruben." said Matilda, staggering slightly "We can go over to… the…Tsunami…"

Then suddenly, Matilda fell down onto her knees and fainted! Her injuries from the battle with the panda were too great and she couldn't stay awake any longer. Ruben gasped in horror and he knelt down by the princess's side.

"Matilda! Matilda!" cried Ruben, shaking Matilda's unconscious body "Are you alright? Please, speak to me!"

"She's only unconscious buddy." said Hydra "She'll live. And you're going to be unconscious with her."

"Huh?" said Ruben.

Then suddenly, Hydra grabbed Ruben by the shoulders and stared into his eyes. He had a strange look on his eyes. A look of…regret for some reason. Like he was going to do something he was going to regret.

"I'm sorry Ruben, I'm really, really sorry for what I'm about to do now." said Hydra with a sad expression on his face.

"You're sorry? For what?" asked Ruben worriedly.

"This." said Hydra with a pained look in his eyes.

Then, Hydra suddenly head butted Ruben in the face and knocked him clean out! Ruben fell on top of Matilda and he lay there unconscious on the passed out princess. Hydra just stared at Ruben's body, clearly wanting to stab himself for doing this to his friend. He then reached down and unclipped Ruben's aqua-collar and removed it from around his neck. He took the aqua-collar from Ruben and clipped it around his wrist. He looked at Ruben with tears in his eyes and then turned and ran as fast as he could out of the

barren, panda inhabited wasteland.

"I'm sorry Ruben! I'm so, so sorry!" wailed Hydra as he abandoned his knocked out friend "But I have no choice! She'll kill me otherwise! I hope you can understand once you find out that I'm the thief!"

Hydra ran out the wasteland and then started to run off in a certain direction. He was heading off home to a place that Ruben had been to before…the temple of the Raiju Clan…

Hydra ran all the way through the safe route to the Raiju clan's temple so he wouldn't have to go through the tests and booby traps that normal travellers had to take when wanting to meet them, and he ran into the enormous fortress as quick as he could. He darted through the corridors as fast as he could and he ran to the throne room where the clan's bride resided. He screeched to a halt outside the door and he banged on it furiously.

"Conquering Storm! Conquering Storm!" he cried as he pounded on the door.

Conquering Storm was the leader of the Raiju clan and she was not a woman to be messed with. Highly cold, blunt, straightforward and ruthless, Conquering Storm was one of the deadliest ninja brides alive. She had helped Sonic and friends take down Zira the Ruthless** but that was only so her clan had no challenges or obstacles in their way as they plotted their take over of Chun-Nan. She was secretly evil and Chun-Nan was in for a shock when she took it over and ruled it with an iron fist. Right now she was meditating and she was not pleased to have someone banging on the door and making a terrible racket while she was enjoying the peace. Conquering Storm leaped onto her feet and barked at the door sharply.

"What is it?" she barked "You'd better have a good reason for interrupting my meditation whoever it is at the door!"

Hydra gulped nervously and he opened the door to the throne room. He let himself in and walked up to the lynx in the coolie hat and iron-

toed boots as slowly as he possibly could. Conquering Storm glowered at him and she folded her arms.

"Well? What is the reason for your presence here then Hydra?" she snapped.

"I…gulp!...I have another…aqua-collar for you…Conquering Storm…Ma'Am…" stammered Hydra, handing Conquering Storm Ruben's aqua-collar.

Conquering Storm took the aqua-collar and observed it with delight. A thin smile spread out on her evil lips. The acquisition of yet another aqua-collar seemed to bring Conquering Storm some delight.

"Well done agent." she said, throwing the aqua-collar into a crate full of stolen water panther's aqua-collars that sat on the other side of the room "You have served me well. It sure was delightful of you to aid the Raiju clan in its path to conquest. Have you stolen all the water panther's aqua-collars now?"

"I have." said Hydra grimly "That one I've just stolen belonged to Ruben, the last of the Hailàng clan and one of my best buddies. He was the only one left as he doesn't live in Chun-Nan anymore."

That bit of revelation brought an even bigger smile on Conquering Storm's face. Her steely orange eyes narrowed down to evil slits of pure evil.

"So now the last of the Hailàng clan is merely just a panther now?" she crooned "That makes it even better. I can just imagine the hedgehog's reaction when he finds out his water panther friend no longer has his powers!"

"You know what Conquering Storm, if it wasn't for the fact you've rigged me with an exploding speaker device that allows you to hear my every word," said Hydra, rolling his glove up and showing a bomb device with a speaker that was clamped tightly around his wrist "I'd love to have called Matilda to help defeat you and save me from your evil! But since you've rigged me with one, I'm forced to serve your every will just to save myself from getting blown up! Now

that I've done what you've asked me, can you please, please let me go now?"

"Hydra my foolish little child, how stupid do you think I am?" snorted Conquering Storm "If I release you now, you'll run crying to the kung-fu warriors and get them to terminate me and my clan! You will never get your freedom Hydra!"

"But-but-but you promised me I could go free when I've done my task!" shrieked Hydra "You gave your word of honour!"

"Word of honour indeed!" snapped Conquering Storm "We're the Raiju clan, only through strength and might do you earn anything around here! Now get out of my throne room, I do not wish to see you anymore."

"Yes Conquering Storm." said Hydra miserably.

Hydra knew that arguing with Conquering Storm was pretty much signing your own death warrant so he left Conquering Storm's throne room and slunk outside. However, the moment he left, Conquering Storm whipped a remote device off her belt and pressed a button on it. The moment she pressed the button, the bomb on Hydra's wrists went off and exploded, killing Hydra in the blink of an eye. A terrible explosion and Hydra's death screams rang out from outside the throne room and then the thunk of a dead body falling down onto the floor was heard afterwards. Hydra was dead and his exploded remains littered the floor outside Conquering Storm's throne room. The evil lynx grinned wickedly to herself and she threw the remote away. She wandered over to her throne and spoke into a phone device built into the wall she used for communication purposes around the temple without having to leave the room.

"Dàfēng Rai!" she barked into the device "There's a rather nasty mess outside my throne room. I am giving you the task of cleaning it up."

"Yes Conquering Storm." came the voice of her head ninja Dàfēng Rai, the best of the Raiju clan next to Conquering Storm.

Now that business was sorted, Conquering Storm sat down on her

throne and sighed happily to herself.

"It was a good idea of mine, kidnapping an innocent water panther and forcing him to steal all the water panther's aqua-collars and relinquish the pesky panthers of their water powers." she purred to herself "Now those water panthers will be easier to take down and the Raiju clan's quest for glory will be complete. My good masters always told me that the Raiju clan was destined for greatness and conquering the country will be more then enough greatness for this mighty clan! I can almost picture the emperor's face when he realizes one of Chun-Nan's saviours actually intends to harm the country worse then what Zira the Ruthless already has in her failed attempts."

She finished off her little gloat with a soft, evil chuckle. The Raiju clan was getting ever closer to glory, so close in fact that Conquering Storm could almost taste it and she looked forward to when the Raiju clan conquered Chun-Nan at last…

Back at the Land of the Pandas, Ruben finally came to after Hydra had knocked him out. He rubbed his throbbing head and he sat up straight, stretching and wondering what had just happened. He winced as his head began to throb.

"Ow! My head!" he muttered "What did I just get hit by again?"

Just as Ruben had finished waking up, Matilda began to come to as well. She was feeling a little crummy from the fight with the pandas but she was OK enough to get back up. She sat up on her knees and she began to rub herself all over. Ruben noticed that Matilda was awake and his face brightened.

"Matilda, you're up." he said "How do you feel?"

"Not my best really." said Matilda weakly "That panda fight really wore me down. I'll be fine though, my wounds will heal. How are you?"

"I'm fine." said Ruben "Although my head hurts for some reason." he

added, rubbing it slightly "And my neck feels funny. I can feel the breeze on it for some…reason…" his voice slowed down as he suddenly realized what was going on.

His hands suddenly lunged up and closed quickly around his throat and he noticed that the terrible of all terrible things had just happened to him. His aqua-collar was gone! It had been stolen and Ruben had a good idea on who it was that had stolen it. Ruben couldn't believe what had just happened.

"My aqua-collar!" shrieked Ruben "No! No please no! It can't be! My aqua-collar's gone!"

"Oh no!" exclaimed Matilda "You've been robbed Ruben! The thief must have struck while I was asleep! But where's Hydra? He's gone too."

"I think I know where he is." muttered Ruben "Run off somewhere and he has my aqua-collar!"

"He has your…? Don't be ridiculous Ruben, Hydra wouldn't steal your aqua-collar." said Matilda "He's helping us find the thief."

"No Matilda, I think he IS the thief." said Ruben "While you were out of it, he suddenly grabbed me and knocked me out with a head butt. And then I wake up minus Hydra and my aqua-collar so that clearly means the thief is Hydra!"

"Oh my gosh…that's terrible! Absolutely terrible!" cried Matilda in horror "He…How could he do this to his own kind? Hydra's betrayed the water-panthers and has robbed every single water-panther of their collar! That's just horrible! How could he do that?"

"I dunno but once I get my hands on that dirty traitor I will make him squeal if it's the last thing I do!" yelled Ruben, pounding his hand with his fist "How dare he betray the water panthers and steal their collars! I hope he was a good explanation for this or I will personally take it upon myself to kill that subversive fiend!"

"Ruben, killing him is not going to solve anything." said Matilda sternly "We find Hydra and we question him on his treachery, we will

not harm him in anyway."

"Yes, we'll do that." said Ruben, claming down a little "I'm sorry I got carried away in my anger Matilda."

"I forgive you." said Matilda "I understand your anger. Hydra's one of your best friends and he's stealing aqua-collars so I can easily see why you're so mad about it."

"I'm more then just mad about it." said Ruben grimly "I'm downright upset about it too! I thought Hydra was my friend and then he goes and steals my aqua-collar and leaves me out here alone! Although he seemed to have great regret in doing so. Before knocking me out, he acted all apologetic to me and then he just knocked me out. Maybe someone's forcing him to do this or something."

"Maybe." said Matilda agreeably "If he was regretful about having to steal your collar then he must have been blackmailed into stealing all the aqua-collars. Well we must find Hydra and find out everything about what's going on with him and the aqua-collar thefts."

"I agree, let's go Matilda." said Ruben "But where do we go from here?"

"We'll go home to the Pagoda of Prosperity and break the news to my dad." said Matilda "Then we'll think about our next step."

So Matilda and Ruben got up onto their feet and they left the Land of the Pandas behind and headed off to the Pagoda of Prosperity to tell Emperor Tai what they had just found out today. Unfortunately, they were coming home to something much worse then the thieving of aqua-collars. Something much, MUCH worse…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 83**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 56**

Bet none of you saw THAT coming did you? Hydra being the thief! Just a darn pity he's dead now so Ruben will never get to ask him! Oh well, so what's going to happen next? Tune in next time for the exciting finale to this arc! Reviews are welcome. No flames.

Bet you'll never see pandas the same way again after this will you? XD

The Water Panther Plunder 4

Arc 12: The Water Panther Plunder

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 95-97

Part 4: Duel of Fates

Being a guard at one of Chun-Nan's most secure prisons of all time sounded like an amazing job to have. It sort of is in a way but it's also nerve racking as heck as this prison, known as the Lóng de dòngxué* prison, tended to be the prison that has the most dangerous of Chun-Nan's villains due to it's reputation as being the most secure prison ever and being notoriously hard to break in and out of. Two such villains were being held here. These two were Fong Zarr, the leader of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan, and Zira the Ruthless, the most dangerous kung-fu warrior in all of Chun-Nan. She had tried to ransack the Pagoda of Prosperity after finally discovering it's presence only to be defeat by the Raiju Clan and Emperor Dalon Tai** and after her defeat, she was finally locked up and was going to remain here for the rest of her life. Fong Zarr on the other hand had been defeated during the treacherous Governor Shen's festival folly and had been arrested after killing Governor Shen and he was going to spend life in the Lóng de dòngxué prison. Fong Zarr was chained to the wall by his arms and legs in his cell whereas Zira had it worse. Chains weren't enough to keep this bad kitty down so her limbs had been spread out in an X position and had been infused with concrete right down to her elbows and knees respectively. The concrete blocks were incredibly thick too, about thirty inches thick all around, making her even more immobile. She could not move at all. Not even a kung-fu expert like Princess Matilda's Master Kai Zen would be able to break out of having his limbs infused in concrete. Zira was incredibly immobile and was going absolutely nowhere. This brought great delight to the guards of the prison, especially the Chief of the Guards. He was a heavily armoured and very muscular Ox named Niú***. He was a highly respected guard in this prison and one of few people who's gotten

into scraps with evil martial artists and lived to tell the tale. He had the scars to prove it. His armour was solid chrome and coloured a shiny metallic red and trimmed with gold around the edges. His horns were enormous and anyone who missed with them would get them and get them good. Niú hated convicts and evil-doers so you can somewhat imagine why he took the job as guard, it meant he had to prevent the prisoners from escaping and he could treat them as he wished. And right now he was getting sadistic pleasure in taunting the imprisoned Zira the Ruthless. He had been taunting her since the day she got arrested and was not stopping anytime soon. Today was no different; he was taunting her yet again. He arrived into Zira's cell with a bowl of porridge in his hand. Zira glowered at him with her steely feline eyes but she said nothing to the powerful ox in the chrome armour.

"Good afternoon Zira." purred Niú in his deep, gravely, chilling voice "Its lunch time and look what I've brought for you."

He showed Zira the bowl of porridge. Zira didn't show any interest in it. She wasn't a food crazy person and she knew what the fox was going to do with the bowl. Niú flashed Zira a nasty smile and then he proceeded to hurl the bowl in Zira's face, covering her with porridge and then just to add insult to injury, he smashed the bowl in Zira's head, not that it would hurt her that much given how she's a kung-fu warrior that's in-between the master and expert stage and merely smashing a bowl on her head wasn't going to hurt her that much. Zira just growled at the ox.

"Why do you have this sadistic pleasure in taunting me to no end Niú?" she hissed.

"Because you are an evil kung-fu warrior Zira." snarled Niú "And people of your nature don't deserve hospitality and I will treat you scum how I like! If it were up to me, I would just tear your heart out of your chest and leave you to die but that isn't the honouree way and stooping down to your level is not a good example to set for the other guards so I'm forced to leave you alive. I don't mind though as I get great enjoyment in your misery Zira the Defeated! It really is a case of how the mighty have fallen…"

He wondered over to the concrete chunks holding Zira's limbs and

tapped one of them.

"…for you were one of the strongest kung-fu warriors out there and had the local heroes Bladefeather and Mushu wrapped around your little finger like mindless servants as well as those Yīnyǐng Mao scum ninjas and had the strength to even defeat Master Shan," he went on "And yet you got defeated by a ninja clan nobody's heard of and the emperor who can't even learn kung-fu because of his arthritis! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Then again the emperor does know the nerve freezing move so that would account for something but still, that must have been a humiliating defeat for you Zira wasn't it?"

"It was you hulking waste of muscle." muttered Zira "Being subdued by the emperor himself! Never before have I been so dishonoured! If it wasn't for the fact that I am bound in accursed concrete I would snap that emperor's neck like a Bo staff! No, that isn't good enough; I'd break his back at the same time just to make it hurt more!"

"Oh really?" sneered Niú "Well then you'll have to wait until your sentence is up before you can do that. Only, your sentence will be up once you're dead! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Zira could do nothing more but glower at Niú as the armoured ox began to double over laughing at her. How that ox got on her nerves! If she wasn't bound in concrete then she would snap that stupid ox in two like a twig! But given how cruel fate had been to her, she was powerless to do anything about it so she just had to grit her teeth and bear the obnoxious ox's quips. After Niú finally stopped laughing, he faced Zira again and flashed her a big toothy grin that made him look incredibly eerie.

"I'm off now Zira." he said "But I've got one more thing to say to you before I leave."

Before saying his last words though, he suddenly slugged Zira in the stomach and made her gasp and splutter in pain. Zira stared down at the ground and began to cough as pain flooded up her stomach. If she didn't know kung-fu, that punch would have hurt much more. Niú sneered at the winded leopard and then said his last piece.

"Treating you like garbage doesn't get old at all!" he snickered.

With that said, he left the cell, laughing like a hyena to himself. Zira growled furiously and tried feebly to break free of her concrete bonds once again. She'd been trying for months on end but the result was always the same, she couldn't move and she couldn't break free. Since her limbs were infused up to her joints, she couldn't bend her arms or knees in anyway and therefore, was unable to get the motion needed to break free. Niú peeked through the bars on the door of Zira's cell to see her feebly struggling and he laughed again as he left the cell and went on down the corridor.

"Ah ha, ha, ha, ha!" he cackled to himself "She's been here for months and I'm still not fed up of tormenting her! It'll be a shame when she passes away in that cell of hers, I won't get to taunt her anymore!"

He was still cackling to himself by the time he left the corridor and walked out of the prison to get some fresh air. However, his laughter was suddenly replaced by gasps of shock when he walked out of the prison and realized that he suddenly had intruders on the prison grounds. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan had all arrived at the prison and they were waiting to take out the prison guards and try to break Fong Zarr out of prison. They bent down in battle ready stances and prepared to do battle. They had healed up decently enough from Matilda's beating earlier and they were all ready for battle. Shang Dao and Zhou Kai were not with the ninjas though for this was part of their new plan. The foot soldiers were providing the distractions while Shang Dao and Zhou Kai broke into Fong Zarr's cell and freed their leader from his incarceration. Shang Dao and Zhou Kai hid around the sides of the prison and waited for the battle to start. Niú snorted loudly, steam blowing out of his nostrils as he did so and he unsheathed a long sharp sword that was in a scabbard on his back. He pointed the sword at the shadow cats and bellowed a loud ox bellow at them.

"Yīnyǐng Mao scum!" he growled "Trying yet again to free your stupid leader? Well in that case, I'll have to arrest you all! Maybe kill you all if necessary!"

The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas all drew out their weapons and they charged towards Niú, the ox brandishing his sword and bellowing loudly at the top of his voice. The other guards heard Niú's bellow so

they ran outside the prison to aid their chief in the fight. This was going to be a crazy battle between prison guards and ninjas and while the guards were likeliest to win since they won all the other fights in the past but the Yīnyǐng Mao were going to get away with Fong Zarr as Shang Dao and Zhou Kai were breaking into the prison and since all the guards were outside the prison fighting off their clan, they would have no interruptions and Fong Zarr was as good as free. However, a Raiju Clan lynx in traditional ninja attire stood on a large cliff that looked over the Lóng de dòngxué prison and watched what was happening. He was a Raiju spy sent out by Conquering Storm to see how things were going outside her territory and he was getting a horrible idea in his head that the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was trying to break Fong Zarr out of the prison. While this was of no concern of his, it did present the Raiju Clan the perfect opportunity to keep up their pretence as heroes so he contacted his insidious master Conquering Storm and decided to inform her of what was going on now. He touched something in his ear and he spoke to his leader.

"Bride of the Conquering Storm." said the ninja "There's a breakout going on at the Lóng de dòngxué prison. The Yīnyǐng Mao clan are attempting yet again to break Fong Zarr out and I have a feeling that they've got some kind of stratagem this time around."

"Thank you for the information my good spy." came Conquering Storm's voice from the communicator in his ear "This opportunity to keep up our pretence is too good to pass up. I shall arrive here as fast as possible. You keep me updated on the current status of the prison."

"Yes master." said the spy, shutting off the communicator.

He folded his arms and continued to watch as the battle between the guards and the ninjas raged on outside the prison walls. Conquering Storm would be here in time to save the day and the Raiju Clan would again be praised for it's heroism and gain love and respect that it will soon lose when they reveal themselves as the evil ninjas they really are…

"So if I've got you correctly dearest," said Emperor Dalon Tai, emperor of Chun-Nan "You managed to save Ruben and Hydra from those scornful shadow cats and then joined them on their search for the aqua-collar thief only to get ambushed by pandas on the way to the Tsunami Clan and after killing the lead panda you fainted from exhaustion and Hydra knocked Ruben out and stole his collar?"

Matilda and Ruben had returned to the Pagoda of Prosperity and Matilda had explained everything to her father. Tai had been horrified to hear Matilda, Ruben and Hydra had unwittingly ended up getting into a fight with real live panda bears but what shocked him more then anything was the fact that Hydra turned out to be the one stealing everybody's aqua-collars. It shocked him to no end that a water panther ended up stooping down to such a low level and ended up stealing his own race's aqua-collars. The first thing he wanted to do was catch Hydra and question him on this but given how they had no idea where Hydra could possibly be right now, they would have to wait until they found him before they could shoot him down on why he's betrayed his own race.

"Yes daddy." said Matilda sadly "Hydra stole Ruben's aqua-collar. Ruben tells me Hydra grabbed him and then head butted him in the face, knocking him clean out and when he woke up he's missing his aqua-collar and Hydra wasn't with us when me and him came to so the thief is definitely Hydra. Although I find that hard to believe."

"How could a member of the Zhangcháo clan do this to his own kind?" asked Ruben as he felt his bare neck. How strange it felt without a collar around it he thought "Those collars give us our powers and make us water panthers until our leaders give us permanent water powers and we don't need the collars anymore. Now our collars have gone and we haven't been given permanent water powers by our brides or masters, we're just panthers now. I feel so weird without my collar and it feels even weirder to not have the feeling of water flowing through your bloodstream and it's all because of Hydra. I just can't understand why he would do such a thing. It just doesn't seem like the Hydra I know."

"This definitely doesn't sound like the Hydra I know." muttered Tai "Hydra is a fun loving lad with a bit of a cheeky side to him but he's

no thief. And yet he turns thief now. I wonder if there's more to this then we know about."

"There probably is." said Ruben "Before knocking me out, Hydra was apologizing to me for what he was going to do and he had a pained look in his eyes as if he was going to regret what he was going to do. That must mean he's probably being blackmailed into doing this or he was only sorry to me in particular because I'm a good friend of his."

"Well the water panthers were all robbed in their sleep." said Tai "Or so they reported. Hydra would have no need to knock anybody out as they were all asleep but if he was regretting having to knock you out just to steal your collar then there must be something going on with him."

"I'll try and find the traitor daddy." said Matilda "I give you my word of honour that Hydra will be brought to justice and we can find out what's going on with him."

"I wouldn't get too hopeful dearest." said Tai gently "Hydra could be anywhere and it could take you a while until you find him."

"Not helped by the fact Chun-Nan is a big country so he's got a lot of places to hide in." muttered Ruben "No matter, I'm not letting my own kind go without their aqua-collars. I am getting them back and nothing is going to stop me from doing so."

"I like that determination Ruben." said Tai "But don't try too hard in your search. You don't want to wear yourself down to the point you can't go on anymore."

"I'll take it each day at a time your majesty." said Ruben with a polite bow "I'll find Hydra and get our collars back even if I die trying."

"Very well." said Tai "One more thing though…try not to get into a fight with anymore pandas you two. I don't want the last of the Hailàng clan and my own daughter to become victims of the pandas."

"I won't daddy." said Matilda "I give you my word of honour that I'll

never go back to the Land of the Pandas. Next time I visit the Tsunami clan, I shall go around the land to avoid them."

"Good girl Matilda." said Tai brightly "Now if you wish, you may continue looking for Hydra so that you may retrieve all the stolen aqua-collars and question the traitor on his actions."

Matilda and Ruben both bowed at their emperor and they left the Pagoda of Prosperity to continue their search. Matilda then suddenly had a thought in her head. Was the thieving of the water panther's aqua-collars and her nightmarish vision she'd had earlier linked somehow? She did remember seeing some water panthers in the vision and they didn't seem to have aqua-collars on their necks so maybe they were linked somehow. And if they were did that mean the assassin in the vision might have something to do with the thieving of the aqua-collars? Then again it was only a nightmarish vision and it couldn't possibly be linked to real life events. But sometimes visions came true and Matilda had a feeling hers was going to come true. But now was not the time to start theorizing, they had a traitor to catch and question and that was to be Matilda's only priority from now on. But Ruben and Matilda didn't get very far. No sooner had they left the Pagoda of Prosperity, a guard from the Lóng de dòngxué prison ran up to the two and stopped dead in his tracks. He looked frantic and Matilda could tell he didn't have some very good news to give at all.

"Hello there, what seems to be the problem?" asked Matilda politely.

"Oh princess, you've gotta come quickly!" shrieked the guard "The Yīnyǐng Mao have broken into Lóng de dòngxué prison and are trying to break their leader out again! They've come back strong though, the guards are having a hard time taking them down! Can you please help us?"

"Sure." said Matilda "It's bad enough there's someone stealing aqua-collars from the water panthers, I'm not about to let the Yīnyǐng Mao clan break their leader out of prison where he belongs. Are you coming along Ruben?"

"I may not have water powers anymore but I've still got some fighting skills in me." said Ruben determinedly "Not to mention I owe

those cats a headache for kidnapping me earlier and attempting to use me for ransom."

"Very good." said Matilda "Let's go and stop the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!"

Ruben gave Matilda a courageous smile that said to her "You said it!" and the two Mobians ran off to the Lóng de dòngxué prison to stop the Yīnyǐng Mao clan from breaking Fong Zarr out. If they failed then that meant the Yīnyǐng Mao clan would be strong again and that would give Matilda another failure to take in. Failing to find the thief and catch him even though he was right under their noses was bad enough but the Yīnyǐng Mao clan getting their leader back was just going to pour salt on the wounds so Matilda was determined not to let the insidious clan of ninja cats free their leader…

Back at the Lóng de dòngxué prison, the guards and the ninjas were all engaged in a hectic battle that was full of flailing weapons, flying bodies and loud battle cries. Since the guards had been trained specially to fight against martial artists, they were holding out much better then any normal guard would ever do. Niú swung his enormous sword at one ninja cat but the cat dodged the swipe and landed behind him. He dropkicked Niú in the back and sent the ox sprawling onto the ground. Niú picked himself up and swiped his sword at the cat again. The cat dodged the attack and another cat pounced on Niú's back but the ox threw him off and slashed him across the stomach with his sword. The cat limped away from the battle to save himself further punishment, his stomach dribbling with blood as he crept away from the armoured ox with the large sword. Two ninjas got the drop on Niú with a bunch of kicks and they threw shuriken at him. The shuriken pinged harmlessly off his armour and Niú swiped at them both with his sword. The two cats back flipped away from Niú and they both pile-dived the ox in the stomach, knocking him down onto his back. Niú however grabbed their heads and bashed them both together, knocking the two cats out and leaving himself able to stand back up again. Niú picked himself back up and lowered his head. He scraped the soil with his hooves, bellowed a frightening ox bellow and he charged towards five ninja cats as if he was a bull charging at the matador. The cats squealed like girls as they saw the armoured ox running towards them and Niú

butted them all with his powerful head. The cats were sent hurling through the air and they crashed down in rather awkward positions all around the prison grounds. They had all survived that attack, amazingly enough, but they didn't have much strength left in them to fight so they fled the battle. They were only the distraction after all so it didn't matter if they lost. They just had to keep the fight up as long as possible until Fong Zarr was free. Two guards who were with Niú were engaged in a sword fight with some ninja cats. The two guards were both ox and they were just as armoured as Niú was, albeit less frightening looking and a little smaller then he was but they were still guards to be reckoned with, especially as they were mean guys with swords. The guards and the ninjas clashed swords violently and sparks flew off the cold steel of the blades. This sword fight was getting very heavy handed and it was going to get pretty nasty for one of the opponents. Other guards in the prison, who were a mix of rhinos, bulls, hippos and even tigers, were heavily engaged with the ninja cats and they were all fighting very callously. Swords clashed, maces swung, nunchakus whacked, spears flew and staffs swung everywhere. It was complete chaos around the prison guards and ninjas all unleashing hell on each other. While all this carnage was going on, Shang Dao and Zhou Kai both sneaked into the prison as quietly as they could, taking great care not to be seen, not that being seen should be a worry for them as the guards were all outside fighting their foot soldiers. After sneaking into the prison, they darted off down the corridors and searched for Fong Zarr's cell.

"The plan is working Zhou Kai!" cried Shang Dao "Can you believe it?"

"I can Shang Dao." said Zhou Kai "The foot soldiers are distracting the guards beautifully and the prison is empty of all guards as they're all outside fighting the foot soldiers so the plan's going to work brilliantly of course."

"I wonder what Fong Zarr's going to say about this when we get him out of his cell and deliver him back home at long last." said Shang Dao as they ran up a flight of stairs to the next floor of the prison.

They made it to the top of the floor and ran down the corridor, looking through the cell doors in search of Fong Zarr. Luckily for

them, they didn't need to do much searching as this floor was the floor Fong Zarr was on and they found his cell after looking through ten cell doors already. They saw their master chained to the wall by his arms and legs and looking very furious. Prison life had not been kind to him just as it hadn't been kind to Zira. The two ninja cats beamed and they broke the door down with a powerful kick each. The door was thrown off its hinges and landed with a heavy clang on the floor, startling Fong Zarr dearly. Fong Zarr's eyes widened in surprise when he found out that Shang Dao and Zhou Kai had arrived at the prison to get him out at long last.

"Ninja cats!" he cried out delightedly in his gravely voice "You're attempting to get me out yet again only this time you're actually succeeding!"

"Yes we are master." said Zhou Kai with a loyal bow to his leader "Our foot soldiers are keeping the guards busy while we break you out master."

"An ingenious idea." Fong Zarr complimented "And it's working to perfection. Never before has any of you actually made it to my cell in your attempts to free me. Well done ninja cats."

Shang Dao and Zhou Kai both smiled together and they ran into Fong Zarr's cell. They drew out a katana each and they sliced Fong Zarr's chains to pieces, freeing him and leaving him able to walk freely once again. Fong Zarr smiled evilly at the fact he was now free and he ran out of his cell with his two minions following him. Zira could hear the commotion outside and she scowled to herself.

"Trust those Yīnyǐng Mao morons to break in and rescue their leader!" she grumbled "If only someone would break in to this stupid prison and rescue me!"

But since Zira had no friends or minions, that wasn't going to happen at all. Zira would have to get herself out or hope that somebody would come and break her out in the end. The likelihood of either of those happening was a million to one so she'd just have to face it, she was stuck here forever. However, it seemed that Fong Zarr might not be so lucky in escaping after all. As the escaping ninja cats ran down the corridor, something leaped in through the

window of the prison and landed directly in front of them, stopping the two cats dead in their tracks. It was none other then the Raiju clan leader Conquering Storm! After receiving the spy's message, she had left her fortress to stop the prison break and had finally arrived at the Lóng de dòngxué prison. Conquering Storm bent down in a battle ready stance and prepared to cut loose on the ninja cats. Fong Zarr, Shang Dao and Zhou Kai all prepared to do battle too. They bared their teeth and hissed at her in the manner of a traditional cat.

"I know you." growled Fong Zarr "You're that woman who helped us all defeat Zira the Rrrruthless. And know it seems you've come to stop me from escaping. This just begs the question how did you come to know about this?"

"I have my ways." said Conquering Storm bluntly "And in case you're wondering what made me come up here instead of helping the guards outside with your foot soldiers, I'll tell you. I remember the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and how many there are in the clan and when I arrived at the prison, I observed the fight and noticed there were two missing and it was pretty obvious where they were so I leaped through a window and now I'm here to prevent you three from making it out of here."

"Clever woman." muttered Fong Zarr "But your intelligence just means I have more of an excuse to terminate you. Shang Dao! Zhou Kai! Let's get her!"

With that said, the three ninja cats all pounced on Conquering Storm, giving out vicious cat screeches as they did so. Conquering Storm just waited for them to come near her before making her move. She leaped up into the air and dropkicked Fong Zarr down on the floor. Then she backhanded Shang Dao into a wall and grabbed Zhou Kai around the neck. She hurled Zhou Kai face-first into the wall, the impact leaving cracks on the wall and leaving the poor cat dazed and confused on the floor. Fong Zarr picked himself up and he slashed at Conquering Storm with his claws. Since his twin katanas had been confiscated, he had to rely on his claws for weapons now. Conquering Storm back flipped away from Fong Zarr and ran back towards him. Fong Zarr leaped up and stretched his leg out, ready to kick Conquering Storm's face in. Conquering Storm

bent over backwards, causing Fong Zarr to hurl over her and miss. He crashed into the floor and hurt his leg as he hit the floor because it was stretched out. He grimaced in pain and began to rub his leg better but Conquering Storm grabbed him by his vest coat and threw him back into his cell, not that it would be doing anyone any good since the door was knocked down. Fong Zarr growled furiously and he picked up the knocked down door. He may not be the best ninja around but he's still got strength on his side. He ran out of his cell and charged towards Conquering Storm with the door in his hands. Conquering Storm was just dealing with Shang Dao and Zhou Kai until Fong Zarr charged in and walloped the lynx in the iron-toed footwear with the door. Unfortunately Fong Zarr's coordination got the best of him. He had hit Conquering Storm…but the attack had sent her flying into Zira's cell and Conquering Storm knocked the door clean off its hinges! Conquering Storm groaned in pain and she picked herself up, wondering how Fong Zarr had been able to pick up a steel door and wield it to deadly effect. She shook it off and ran out of the cell, leaving a bewildered Zira to stare in surprise at her.

"Conquering Storm?" she blurted "That stupid little lynx is back? I do hope she's not here to gloat at me! Then again, she's failed to notice that I'm right here and she appears to be in combat with Fong Zarr and his rescuers so she must be trying to keep Fong Zarr locked up. I hope she succeeds."

Zira only hoped that because she hated Fong Zarr just as much as she hated everything else. As the fight outside her cell continued, she noticed that her cell door had been knocked down. If she wasn't infused in concrete then maybe she could escape from here! All she had to do was hope someone would accidentally break her concrete bonds and then she was free! That wasn't likely to happen though but it could happen depending on how the fight plays out…

Meanwhile, Matilda and Ruben had finally arrived at the Lóng de dòngxué prison and as they arrived, the first thing they noticed was the guards seemed to have this in the bag. They were winning their fight against the foot soldiers and seemed to have everything under control. Then again, it never hurts to help out and if Matilda and Ruben fought in this match, they would have the prison break dealt with even faster and everything would be back to normal quicker.

Matilda cracked her knuckles and prepared for battle.

"Boy are my knuckles going to feel sore in the morning after all this fighting I've done today." she murmured "I've already thought those insidious shadow cats, then I fight panda bears and kill one of them and now I'm fighting the Yīnyǐng Mao clan again. I haven't done this much fighting since the festival folly of last year."

"Are you sure you're up to the task Matilda?" asked Ruben "I mean, you got beaten to the point you fainted during the panda fight, will you be in good enough condition to fight those ninja cats?"

"I may not be at my strongest but I'm strong enough to deal with this little Ruben." said Matilda reassuringly "Beatings I've received or not, I can't let those cats free Fong Zarr from his chains."

Before Matilda and Ruben could go into battle, Ruben heard a loud thunk coming from above and he looked up at the prison temple only to see Conquering Storm and Fong Zarr fighting through a window. The water panther couldn't believe his eyes.

"Um…your highness?" said Ruben, tugging Matilda's dress to catch her attention "I think we're a little too late. Look up there."

Matilda looked up at where Ruben was pointing and she could see the battle going on through the window. Conquering Storm was fighting off Fong Zarr and two of his cronies. It surprised Matilda to see Conquering Storm here to help again but it shocked her to see she was fighting Fong Zarr and two of his cronies. That meant he had already escaped with help from his cronies!

"Oh no! Fong Zarr's out!" cried Matilda "The foot soldiers must be the distraction while two of Fong Zarr's men break him out! Conquering Storm appears to be keeping them at bay though but I think me and you should give her a hand."

"I agree with you on that one Matilda." said Ruben happily "I'll be happy to prevent Fong Zarr from getting out of prison."

So without further ado, Matilda did an astounding somersault into the air and hurled gracefully through the window. So did Ruben as

his novice style ninjutsu included good jumping skills. The two Mobians landed inside the prison and they prepared for battle. Conquering Storm kicked Fong Zarr away and noticed that there were two more helpers that had decided to join in on this fight.

"Well, isn't this a surprise?" she crooned "It appears the last of the Hailàng clan and the princess of Chun-Nan have come to help me keep Fong Zarr behind bars. How fortunate of me."

"No! No! Not her!" squealed Fong Zarr, his ears drooping back against his head and his body shaking madly "Not the…princess! Anyone but that demon in mongoose's clothing!"

"Yes Fong Zarr, it is I, Princess Matilda." said Matilda bluntly "And I'm here to make sure you don't escape from here. Conquering Storm," she said, turning to the Raiju clan leader "It's surprising to see you here. I guess you heard of the breakout and decided to foil it?"

"I have indeed princess." said Conquering Storm "And how fortunate it is of me to be aided by the very woman who stopped the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's insidious festival folly plot and the last of the Hailàng. Fong Zarr will never escape now."

"How do you know about what happened last year?" asked Matilda.

"Word travels fast around here remember?" snapped Conquering Storm "Everybody knows of your heroism and valour princess. I find it surprising how the daughter of the emperor is a kung-fu warrior in secret and is almost at the expert stage. Maybe now you're here, you can show me exactly what you're made of."

"Oh she will alright Conquering Storm!" sniggered Ruben "She wiped the floor with those ninja cats and saved me and Hydra earlier so Fong Zarr has no chance!"

Then suddenly, Fong Zarr pounced on Ruben and knocked him down onto the floor. Fong Zarr pinned him down and hissed at him but he stopped himself dead in his tracks for he noticed that Ruben's aqua-collar was missing.

"Water panther, it appears you are missing your collar." he noticed "What happened to you?"

"My collar got stolen by someone who I thought was my friend." muttered Ruben "That's all you need to know."

"How convenient." muttered Fong Zarr "That just means you can't annoy me with your pesky water powers now you've lost your collar!"

"I don't need water powers to defeat you Fong Zarr!" yelled Ruben.

Ruben then proceeded to push Fong Zarr off of himself with his legs. Fong Zarr stood back up and lunged at Ruben but Ruben tripped him up with a kick to the legs and the ninja cat was brought down onto his stomach. Shang Dao drew out a mace he'd bought with him and he tried to hammer Ruben with it but Matilda grabbed his wrist just as he swung his arm down. The mace flew out of Shang Dao's hand…and hurled straight into Zira's cell and hit the concrete block on her left hand side! What made it worse was the fact the mace had hit the block right close to the edge near Zira's arm and the mace had cracked the concrete quite heavily, making it weaker and loosening her arm a little. Zira smiled wickedly to herself and she began squirming and writhing in the concrete grasp. The cracked section near her arm was more then enough for Zira to free it. She pulled her arm out of the concrete block, sending chunks of concrete falling down onto the floor. Zira the sought to freeing her other arm and legs and now one arm was free, she could break the concrete easily.

Outside, Matilda threw Shang Dao into a wall after causing him to lose his mace and she gave Zhou Kai an uppercut before the ninja cat could even lay a finger on her. Fong Zarr got the drop on Matilda with a powerful kick to the back but Conquering Storm kicked him back and sent him hurling into the wall. Zhou Kai picked himself up and tried to lift up the knocked down door to Fong Zarr's cell but he wasn't quite as strong as Fong Zarr so he couldn't lift the door up. Instead, he threw it at Matilda but Ruben jumped in and kicked the door away from Matilda, sending it hurling into Zhou Kai's face and knocking him over. The door landed with a heavy clang further down the corridor. Shang Dao immediately got furious and he tried to grab

Ruben but Ruben elbowed him in the gut and then roundhouse punched him in the face.

"I owe you two a lot of pain for kidnapping me earlier!" yelled Ruben as he gave Shang Dao an uppercut that knocked him down onto his back.

Before the cat could get back up, Matilda grabbed him and hurled him straight into Fong Zarr. Fong Zarr leaped out of the way of Shang Dao and the cat landed sharply on his back. So sharply in fact he thought he'd cracked his spine for a second there. Fong Zarr growled furiously at Matilda and despite the fact he was scared stiff of her, he charged towards her. He knew he had to fight the mongoose if he was to get out of this prison so he put his fears aside and began to attack. Fong Zarr rammed Matilda into the wall with his shoulder and Matilda slammed back first into it. Before Matilda could ready herself for another attack, Fong Zarr rammed her again with his shoulder and began to continuously ram her over and over in hopes of weakening her. But Matilda was made of strong stuff, a mere ram of the shoulder from a ninja leader who isn't even at Conquering Storm's level of ninjutsu wasn't going to bring her down. Fong Zarr readied himself for another ram but Matilda rolled out of his way, causing him to ram the wall instead and hurt himself. Fong Zarr shouted in pain and he clutched his throbbing arm. Conquering Storm leapt in and bashed him on the head with both fists clasped together. Fong Zarr droned stupidly for a moment and Conquering Storm then tripped him up. She prepared to kicked Fong Zarr in the gut but the sound of concrete breaking caught her attention and she ceased her forthcoming attack so she could find out what the noise was about. Matilda and Ruben heard it too and it was coming from Zira's cell but they didn't know who's cell it was so they began to wonder what was happening in there. Then to their horror, Zira the Ruthless, kung-fu warrior and neck-snapper stepped out of the cell with an evil grin on her face and a fiery look in her eyes! She had broken free of her concrete bonds and the only evidence of her being infused in concrete was her trousers, they were stained with concrete dust and the fur on her arms had concrete dust in it too. Zira bared her claws, flashed her canines and narrowed her eyes down to evil slits that could kill somebody with a faint heart.

"Free…at long last…I'm free of my concrete bonds!" she screeched happily "Now Chun-Nan shall crumble to me like an old temple that's ready for destruction!"

Matilda and Ruben were so horrified at this they thought the mere shock of seeing Zira free again was going to kill them whereas Conquering Storm kept her shock to herself as she was the kind of woman who expressed only a few emotions and they were delight, anger and annoyance. While the three were distracted Fong Zarr, Shang Dao and Zhou Kai all legged it as fast as they could. Matilda heard them running for it and she stopped them dead in their tracks.

"Oy! Where do you think you're going?" she asked crossly.

"We're fleeing the scene was we do not want to have to face that leopard witch again!" retorted Fong Zarr "You can deal with her yourselves! We're giving you a choice though princess. Either let us go free and stop Zira or let Zira go free and stop us. There's no way you'll be able to catch both of us."

Fong Zarr was right on that one. Zira was incredibly fast so if they tried to catch Fong Zarr, she'd be out of here in a millisecond and they'd lose the most dangerous enemy in all of Chun-Nan. Then again, Fong Zarr wasn't much of a challenge so they could easily send one of them to get Fong Zarr while the other two get Zira. But Zira was a powerful warrior and it was going to take all three of them to take the kung-fu leopard down. Zira was the more dangerous foe so she had to be contained but so did Fong Zarr as he was a legitimate threat too. However, it seemed Zira had decided for them as her first response was to pounce on Matilda and bring her down, prompting Conquering Storm and Ruben to try and help her. Fong Zarr smirked at them and looked at his minions with a smug smile on his face.

"I guess Zira answered that for us." he purred.

With that said, the two cats fled for it, leaving the others to deal with Zira. The leader of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was free at last and now the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was whole once again. He couldn't wait to get back into the crime business again after spending months in a cell and boy was Chun-Nan in for a shock when the Yīnyǐng Mao clan

attacked with him at their side again. As for the others, Zira had pinned Matilda down and she tried to grab Matilda's neck but Matilda kept her arms away so the leopard couldn't grab her. Conquering Storm kicked Zira away from Matilda and sent her skidding into a wall. Ruben helped Matilda back up and the mongoose in the purple dress bent down in a battle ready stance. She glared at Zira and the kung-fu mistress picked herself up, snarling like a leopard that's ready to pounce on its prey.

"So my resistance is a water panther child, Conquering Storm and her royal highness herself, Princess Matilda?" sneered Zira "With the exception of Conquering Storm, this resistance isn't even worth worrying about!"

"Wrong I'm afraid Zira." said Matilda bluntly "I am a kung-fu warrior although my training was kept secret and I've been trained by a vigilante kung-fu master who's name I cannot mention."

"Don't play the young fool with me princess!" snarled Zira "You can't possibly know kung-fu! You're a princess! The royals NEVER learn martial arts!"

"I kid you not Zira." muttered Matilda "I am at your level of kung-fu and I'm the one responsible for the defeat of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan during the festival folly plot last year. Didn't you hear of that?"

"Of course I didn't!" snapped Zira "This is a prison! Word travels quickly around Chun-Nan but the prison has no ears and therefore, picks up nothing so I know nothing about what's gone on in my absence!"

"Well didn't Fong Zarr say anything about me?" asked Matilda.

"No, Fong Zarr refused to speak to me about anything." muttered Zira "I asked him how he got in here and his response was closed lips and complete silence. So what if you know kung-fu, you'll never defeat me you foolish little girl! I've been given the most vigorous training during my times of decency so I am the more powerful warrior!"

"The hardest training does not guarantee the best training." said

Matilda "I was given the best kind of lessons by my master. Me and you were raised in similar ways but I didn't let anger and vengeance consume my heart unlike yours. My devotion to my country, to my father, to everyone around helped me become what I am and because I have patience to balance my power out, that makes me the better warrior Zira. But violence doesn't solve anything. Please stand down and go back in your cell and save yourself a needless beating or me and my friends will use force. This will be your only warning."

Zira just laughed at the mongoose with the hair sticks and bun style hair.

"Do you really think that your pontificating and petty threats are going to make me stand down?" she sneered "I am the superior warrior princess and I am not staying in here! I shall escape and now I'm going to prove I am the superior warrior as I snap your puny little neck like a spinal cord!"

"Fine." said Matilda "You'll only wish you'd chosen the better path to go down."

That did it. Zira roared at Matilda and rammed her like a charging rhinoceros. Matilda was sent hurling backwards across the prison and she crashed into the wall at the end of the corridor. Matilda winced and she rubbed her back affectionately as she began to feel the impact of that attack. Zira charged towards Matilda and she pounced towards her with her claws bared and her jaws open wide. Matilda leaped up and caught Zira by the shoulders. She head-butted the leopard in the face and then pulled her towards her and kneed her in the stomach. Zira gasped hoarsely as the air in her lungs depleted for a second and Matilda gave her a kung-fu style chop around the face. Zira staggered backwards only to get pile-dived from behind by Conquering Storm. The leopard was sent crashing into the wall and the impact of the crash left heavy cracks in the wall. Conquering Storm and Zira then linked arms with one another and they stared hatefully into each other's eyes.

"The smell of concrete drifts from your limbs." the lynx analyzed "You've been infused in concrete. How did you escape from such a prison?"

"Well while you were fighting Fong Zarr and his idiot minions, a stray mace flew into my cell and crashed into one of the concrete chunks around my left arm and cracked it quite heavily. This in turn made the concrete weak enough for me to pull my arm free and then with a good powerful chop to my bonds, I broke myself free! Whoever owned that mace has my sincerest thanks for helping me escape from this wretched stink hole!"

Matilda's eyes widened at that statement. She had caused Shang Dao's mace to fly out of his hand as he tried to use it and Zira said a mace cracked the concrete enough for her to free herself! So that meant she had just unwittingly helped Zira escape! If Zira made it out of here then she would never forgive herself for this blunder. Zira then suddenly yanked on Conquering Storm's arms and pulled the lynx toward herself. She kneed the lynx in the gut and then grabbed her by the scruff of her neck. She hurled Conquering Storm across the corridor and the lynx landed painfully on her side. Ruben jumped in and leaped up to Zira's height. He then began to rapidly kick Zira in the face, the attack causing her to stagger backwards and Ruben then tail-whipped her into a wall on the right side of the corridor. Zira picked herself up only to get knocked down by Ruben and he forced her arm behind her back in vain attempts to hurt her. Zira wrestled herself out of Ruben's grip and she picked herself up with Ruben clinging onto her back. She grabbed Ruben and slammed him into a wall as hard as she could. Ruben yelled in pain and he struggled in the grasp of the nefarious kung-fu leopard. Zira flashed Ruben a wicked witchy grin and she placed her other hand around the water panther's neck.

"When I slaughtered the Hailàng I ended up missing one somehow." she crooned evilly to Ruben "Well now Hailàng survivor, join your clan in the afterlife!"

But before Zira could make the killer blow, Matilda ran up to Zira and gave the leopard an uppercut to the side of her face that sent her hurling across the corridor. Zira landed inside Fong Zarr's cell and Matilda ran inside to deal with her. She punched at Zira but Zira blocked the attack with a kick and slugged Matilda in the gut. Matilda doubled over for a moment and Zira walloped her on the back of her head, knocking her down onto her knees. Zira then kicked Matilda

out of the cell as hard as she possibly could but Conquering Storm charged in and roundhouse punched Zira in the face with her right arm and then she roundhouse punched her with her left arm. She did this two more times and then gave Zira a tremendous uppercut that sent her flying into the back of the cell and the uppercut was so hard, she ploughed straight through the wall and fell out of the prison and down onto the ground of the outside world. She was around the back of the prison so the guards on the other side wouldn't see her. Zira had the perfect opportunity to escape now as all she had to do was leap over the surrounding walls but that attack had momentarily stunned her for a moment so she couldn't get up in time to avoid getting smacked down again. Conquering Storm leaped out of the hole in the wall and hurled down towards Zira foot first. Zira rolled out of Conquering Storm's way, leaving her to land rather heavily on the ground and leave cracks in it as if she was an anvil falling down from hundreds of feet and onto solid ground down below. Zira pounced on Conquering Storm and brought the lynx down onto the ground. The two warriors began rolling over each other on the ground and both managed to roll up into a standing position. Conquering Storm backhanded Zira in the face just as she was finishing standing back up and Zira pounced on Conquering Storm again. The two martial arts mistresses ended up rolling over each other again only this time, Conquering Storm managed to kick Zira off of herself and knock her backwards. Zira regained her balance and Conquering Storm picked herself up. Zira charged towards Conquering Storm and punched her in the face as hard as she could. Conquering Storm retaliated with a kick to the jaw that almost broke it due to the fact her boots had iron toes. Zira paused for a moment to wipe the blood off her lips and she wrapped her arms around Conquering Storm. She grabbed the lynx in a chokehold and attempt to throttle her but Conquering Storm stomped on her foot and made her let go. She roundhouse punched Zira in the ribs and then head butted her in the face. Zira growled furiously at Conquering Storm and she roundhouse kicked the lynx in the face. Conquering Storm was sent sprawling on the ground and Zira was about to attack her again but Matilda jumped out of the hole in the wall and pile-dived Zira in the back. The two girls ended up rolling over each other on the ground but Zira managed to push Matilda off of herself. Ruben leaped down from the hole in the wall and he kick-slammed Zira in the back of the head. Zira fell down

onto her knees and Ruben punched her in the nose and then grabbed her in a headlock. He punched Zira's forehead as furiously as possible but his novice style martial arts was no match for someone who was near the expert stage like Zira. Zira slashed Ruben across the face and made him let go of her. Ruben clutched his face, which had four streaming cuts on it and Zira gave Ruben an uppercut that sent him hurling into the wall on the other side of the yard. Zira then began to run towards Ruben but Matilda grabbed her by the legs and tripped her up. Zira fell down onto her face and Matilda hurled her back to the centre of the yard. She then grabbed several chunks of stone from the prison walls and threw them like Frisbees at Zira. Every chunk of stone hit Zira in the face and the throws got harder and hard after every stone. After the last stone hit Zira and sent her staggering, Zira picked up some chunks of stone and began throwing them at Matilda. Matilda was more prepared for this then Zira was so she managed to block the attacks with ease. One chunk however was too quick for her and it hit her in the forehead. Matilda clutched her head and staggered for a minute but she regained her balance and Zira pounced on Matilda again. She clamped her jaws on Matilda's shoulder and sank her teeth deep into her shoulder. Matilda screamed in pain and she punched Zira in the eye, making the leopard yowl in pain and let go of her. Matilda gave Zira an uppercut to the chin that made her stagger with her good arm and she clutched her throbbing shoulder. That bite had deeply punctured her shoulder and her arm was feeling a little numb and sore so it wasn't going to be of much use to her now. She'd have to fight one handed now. Zira glowered at Matilda with her evil feline eyes.

"Your kung-fu isn't bad Matilda." she said "You're definitely at my level. Your master has taught you well. That just means I have to kill you even more now!"

"I'll never fall at your evil claws Zira!" declared Matilda "You will not leave this prison and you will not throw Chun-Nan into a state of despair! Even if it kills me, I will defeat you Zira!"

"I think I preferred you when you weren't so eager for a battle!" snarled Zira "That just begs the question as to why you didn't fight me before when I attacked the emperor and your home."

"I wasn't at your level of kung-fu at the time yet that's why." said Matilda "In your absence, I have been trained to your level so I am purely capable of taking you down now."

"We shall see sweetheart." purred Zira in a cold and evil tone.

Then suddenly, Zira charged towards Matilda and walloped her as hard as she could. Matilda managed to keep her balance and she whacked Zira with her good arm. She then kicked the leopard in the gut and made her double over in pain. She then kicked upwards, knocking Zira down onto her back and before the leopard could stand back up, Matilda grabbed Zira by her clothes and threw her towards Conquering Storm. Zira hurled through the air like a tossed basketball and Conquering Storm leaped up into the air. She caught Zira by the neck and threw her down into the ground. Zira landed with a heavy crash on the ground and Conquering Storm landed beside her. Conquering Storm stomped on Zira's back and made her squeal in pain and then Conquering Storm grabbed Zira by the ankles. She lifted Zira up and swung her all the way over onto her back with a heavy slam. Then she threw Zira into the walls of the prison and Zira crashed into the wall upside down in an X position. Zira fell out of the wall and landed on her stomach. Conquering Storm ran over to Zira just as the leopard was picking herself up. Zira recovered just in time to throw a punch at Conquering Storm but the lynx blocked it with her arm and gut punched the leopard. Zira punched at Conquering Storm but Conquering Storm blocked the attack again and uppercut Zira in the chin. Zira uppercut Conquering Storm back and then she gut-punched her. Conquering Storm bent over and clutched her stomach, giving Zira the opportunity to elbow her on the back of the head and knock her down. Zira then tried to stomp on Conquering Storm but Conquering Storm rolled out of the way and picked herself up. She rammed Zira in the side, punched her in the face and then kicked her in the legs. Zira was brought down onto her back and Conquering Storm threw her towards Ruben. Ruben leaped up and grabbed Zira and before he could fall down to the ground, he threw Zira down into the ground. Zira pulled herself up onto her feet but Matilda ambushed her from behind with a punch to the back, a kick to the back of her knee, forcing her leg to bend and then she punched her in the back of the head. Zira was thrown down onto her hands and knees. Zira began to cough and

splutter hoarsely and before she could do anything else, Conquering Strom came in and gave her one final punch. Zira was knocked onto her side and Conquering Storm then gave Zira a nerve pinch that knocked the leopard out. Zira's eyes closed and her body went limp. She had been defeated yet again and now she was going to get put back into prison where she belonged. Matilda, Ruben and Conquering Storm all began to pant, clearly worn out from that hectic battle with the insidious kung-fu leopard.

"Phew…" puffed Ruben "The…witch…is defeated…at last…"

"I…didn't…know…you…knew the…nerve pinch…Conquer…ing… Storm…" panted Matilda, clutching her shoulder and rubbing it to ease the pain a little.

"The nerve pinch…was one of the first…moves I ever…learnt as a child…" explained Conquering Storm "My father taught me it…when I was very young…and I'm still able to use it…to its best effect even to this…day…I cannot believe…I didn't think to…use it in my first fight with Zira…"

"Well even…the…best of…us make mistakes…" noted Matilda "And that's…how we learn things…we make mistakes and we…learn… from them…"

"Yes…you do…" said Ruben "My mother…taught me that lesson too. So…now Zira's defeated shall…we leave her to the guards?"

"Yes." said Matilda "She…can be resealed in concrete and left to rot in her cell yet again…I'm not pleased…that Fong…Zarr got away… though…"

"Fong Zarr's escape is nothing for us to fear." said Conquering Storm in a prideful manner "He's not a serious threat unlike Zira so his escape will not have much of an effect on Chun-Nan. He will be recaptured eventually."

"And hopefully…Hydra…will be found…so I can…question him on… why he's…stolen my…aqua-collar…" muttered Ruben.

"Hydra?" mused Conquering Storm, pretending she hadn't heard the

name before "Whom is this Hydra that you refer to young water panther?"

"Hydra is a member of the Zhangcháo…clan." explained Ruben "Me and him…were looking for the aqua-collar thief but it turned out…to be him after he knocked me out and I woke up with my collar gone. I'm…betting he stole all the other water panther's aqua-collars too."

"Well we cannot have this kind of action going on." muttered Conquering Storm, pretending to be concerned about this "I shall put the Raiju clan on full alert and aid you in your search to find this thief. Once we catch the thief, we shall get him to reveal the location of the stolen collars. Torture him if we have to."

"Oh please…don't hurt Hydra." said Ruben "Just get him to reveal why he's stealing the collars and see if he's being blackmailed or not."

"Very well." said Conquering Storm "We shall see to it that Hydra is not harmed once we apprehend him. For now, I shall return home and rest and then me and my clan shall search for Hydra the aqua-collar thief. Goodbye for now."

With that said, Conquering Storm charged off and leaped over the prison walls. She landed on the other side of the walls and ran off back to the Raiju clan's territory. Matilda and Ruben watched as Conquering Storm left them behind and then they left the prison too, leaving the guards to deal with the knocked out Zira the Ruthless. They were going to go home to the Pagoda of Prosperity and tell Emperor Dalon Tai everything that had just happened now…

"…so Fong Zarr made a clean getaway but Zira is still in captivity." said Tai after Matilda and Ruben told him what had just happened at the prison.

"Yes daddy." said Matilda "Zira has been subdued by Conquering Storm's nerve pinch and she is being dealt with by Niú and his guards."

After arriving back at the Pagoda of Prosperity, Matilda had wrapped her wounded shoulder in bandages and Ruben had bandaged himself up in the places it really hurt and they had both sat down to tell Tai what had happened at the prison.

"Well Matilda, I knew the day would come when you would have to fight Zira the Ruthless." said Tai greyly "And with assistance, you pulled through it all in the end. I'm so proud of you my wonderful daughter."

He kissed Matilda affectionately on the forehead and Matilda hugged her dad lovingly.

"Thanks dad." said Matilda "I'm honoured by your comments."

"And I'm honoured by your bravery." said Tai brightly "So Ruben, are you going back home to the home country of Sonic or do you still wish to find Hydra and retrieve your aqua-collar?"

"I'll stay a little while longer." said Ruben "If I don't find Hydra for a while then I'll go back to New Mobotropolis and tell Sonic about it. Hopefully, he'll be willing to search for my aqua-collar."

"That is a good thought Ruben but do remember you have Matilda, Bladefeather and Mushu to find your collar." said Tai "We even have all the water panther clans of Chun-Nan on the search and even the Raiju clan so you can leave it to us to find your collar. Trust me, we will find the stolen collars and all the water panthers will get their collars back."

"OK." said Ruben "I won't drag Sonic into this. Sonic's got problems of his own to deal with and I don't want to have to drag him into my problems. Hopefully I'll find Hydra soon and get my collar back so I can return to New Mobotropolis and Sonic won't suspect anything."

"For now you must rest." said Matilda gently, patting Ruben on the back "Zira's hurt you pretty badly and you're in no condition to search for Hydra so sit back for a while and then you can start searching again."

"OK Matilda, I will." said Ruben "Thanks for saving my life many

times today by the way."

"You're welcome." said Matilda brightly "And thank you for joining in on this search for the thief and the missing aqua-collars."

Ruben beamed and he lay back on the soft silky cushion he sat in. His collar maybe gone but he will find Hydra eventually and question him on where the stolen collars were. Then he could get his collar back and return home to New Mobotropolis and met up with Sonic and friends. Unfortunately, this search was not going to be easy as he had no clues on where to go from here and Hydra was not going to be easy to find. He could be anywhere and it could take forever to find the thieving little Zhangcháo clan member and get back the stolen collars…

Footnotes:

*** Lóng de dòngxué means "Dragon's Cave" in Chinese**

**** As remembered in the unforgettable Chun-Nan saga (** ***Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 52-56)***

***** Niú literally means "Ox" in Chinese**

And Ruben's arc is over! Not really the happiest of endings to a* Tales from Mobius *arc is it? But hey, I'm a sadistic writer at heart and being mean to my characters is what I do best! So will Ruben get his collar back? Only time will tell!* Tales from Mobius *will return with an arc staring someone you may not expect...Reviews are welcome. No flames.

Tune back into Heroes of Mobius as two of Sonic's friends finally get married and the road to Story 100 begins!

So PROJECT 1-21-18-9-1-19 how does the Ruben arc hold up as a whole? Good arc for a good character? Do tell please. :)

Last Attempt at Victory 1

Arc 13: Last Attempt at Victory

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 111-113

Part 1: Stroke of Genius

Down on the ground, Queen Sally Acorn and the Royal Fighters watched as *The Silver Bullet* took off into the sky, flying past the critically damaged Devatron vessel *The Doombringer* . *The Silver Bullet* was a spaceship belonging to Station Canaveral and Sonic the Hedgehog and his best friend Tails were flying it. They were off to meet the Startrons, cousins of the Devatrons and victims under their rule for their planet was among the fourteen that had been conquered by the Devatrons. They theorized that the Startrons would want to help them defeat the Devatrons since their planet had been conquered by the Devatrons and that the group of Startrons that were in hiding were probably developing ways to defeat the Devatrons. Nobody knew that for sure but that's why Sonic & Tails were going to meet them. They had no other option. The Devatrons were too powerful and they needed a way of defeating them and the Startrons likely had the only way since they were related to them. Devion the Dreaded, leader of the Devatron race, had tried to stop them from taking off but Shadow the Hedgehog, the genetic experiment hedgehog with a lost purpose, had Chaos Blasted their ship and left it critically damaged. *The Doombringer* had turned around and gone back to New Mobotropolis for repairs while the Mobians were just watching Sonic & Tails leave. As *The Silver Bullet* climbed up into the sky and vanished from view, Sally stopped looking up at the sky and she looked at everybody.

"And so it begins." she said "Sonic & Tails are off on their space adventure to meet the Startrons. I really hope that they come back with a way of defeating the Devatrons."

"I'm sure they will your majesty." said Cosmo the Seedrian "Sonic

never lets us down and Tails is equally as reliable."

"They'd better come back with something or another or I will personally slaughter them both!" growled Marik the Martian "I still think the whole thing won't work! The Startron world's been conquered by the Devatrons so how can they possibly help us?"

"Marik, didn't you hear what Tails suggested?" said Nicole the Lynx "There's a group of Startrons in hiding and they're possibly developing ways to defeat them and are waiting to strike at this very moment."

"And what if the ways to defeat them they're developing don't work?" noted Marik "Then we're all dead meat out there! I say Sonic & Tails are wasting their time and we should just destroy them ourselves!"

"Oh sure Marik, let's try the one thing that we keep failing to do again!" snorted Knuckles sarcastically "The Devatrons are too tough for us! They're invulnerable and they can just make more of themselves! We need a way of defeating them and those Startron guys can possibly help us so stop doubting Sonic & Tails and have some faith in them!"

"And if you don't stop I'll break your arm again!" snarled Shadow as Bunnie Rabbot touched down with him under arm.

Marik fumed at Knuckles & Shadow but he said nothing more since this argument was getting them nowhere and there was no real point to it. Shadow took his inhibitor rings from Bunnie and he clipped them back on, a sudden surge of power flowing through his veins as the rings powered him back up.

"If anyone's interested, I've just come up with an idea." said Shadow "You've seen how much damage my Chaos Blast can do and how much it's done to that ship right?"

"Right." said the others.

"So how about I go other to *The Doombringer* and Chaos Blast it again?" suggested Shadow "I could possibly destroy the Devatrons that way and also destroy their ship."

"Now that's a good idea mate!" cried Geoffrey St. John happily "Those blighters won't be able to make more of themselves if their ship's completely destroyed and I'm sure the blast will hit their visors and fry their heads from the inside out! Why didn't we think of this before?"

"If we do that though, Sonic & Tails little trip becomes obsolete." said Rouge "I can just imagine their faces when they come back only to find out the Devatrons have finally been defeated and their trip was all for nothing."

"I won't rub it in faker's face when he comes back….well not much anyway." said Shadow snidely "So what do you say Queen Sally?"

Sally thought on this brilliant idea for a moment before giving her answer.

"That idea can't possibly fail Shadow." said Sally "Their ship's in critical condition so the Devatrons will be focusing on fixing the ship and they won't see you coming."

"So I take it you approve?" asked Shadow.

"I don't see why I shouldn't." said Sally "This is by far the best opportunity to destroy the Devatrons we've had. I really don't know why we didn't think of this before."

"Ideas present themselves at unexpected times your highness." said Ruben "A clever idea may never be thought of at the times we would have liked to have thought it but its better then never thinking of one at all."

"I couldn't agree more Ruben." said Cosmo.

"So then, I'll be going off to defeat those damn Devatrons once and for all." said Shadow "And after I've destroyed them and their ship, I'll search the remains for the power-drained Chaos Emeralds."

"Provided you don't accidentally destroy them with your Chaos Blast." snickered Marik.

"As much as I hate to admit it, Marik's got a point." said Knuckles

"The Chaos Emeralds are difficult to destroy but since they've been power-drained they're weak and fragile. If you Chaos Blast *The Doombringer* without retrieving the emeralds then you'll vaporize them."

"Well in that case I'll retrieve the emeralds BEFORE I lay waste to the Devatrons." said Shadow.

"You'd better be careful on that ship then." said Sally "The Devatrons are dangerous and if they catch you, you'll be in for it. Devion managed to cripple Sonic's back* and it's thanks to Eggman he can actually get up and fight again** so make sure the same doesn't happen to you."

"Devion won't catch me." gloated Shadow "I'm faster then Sonic and I can teleport short distances. He won't be able to lay a finger on me."

"I wouldn't be too over cocky if I were you." said Wilson the Dog "Arrogance can be a warrior's greatest downfall you know."

"I appreciate your concerns but you needn't fret over me." sneered Shadow "I'm the Ultimate Life form, I'll come out on top. So I'll be seeing you all later. Goodbye for now."

With that said, Shadow zoomed off as fast as he could and he headed out of Station Square and on to New Mobotropolis. He had a brilliant plan and it was guaranteed to destroy the Devatrons. But he had to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds first so he wouldn't destroy them as well and would he be able to do that without getting caught? Or was he setting himself up for capture…?

Over at New Mobotropolis, *The Doombringer* had landed at last and the Devatrons were immediately working on getting the ship working again. The damage done to *The Doombringer* was colossal and it had been a miracle that the ship was still capable of flight, albeit barely and it had been a long trip back since *The Doombringer* could no longer go at it's top speed and now flew very slowly. The Devatrons were all working all over the ship to get it fixed and

operational again while Devion remained sitting in his throne giving orders and keeping an eye on the repair work. *The Doombringer* 's damage was immense and it would take a couple of days if not more to finally get it working again. At least facilities such as the production factory and the prison cells were still operational being as they were located in the bottom of the ship and most of the damage done to *The Doombringer* was at the top of the ship. That didn't help things at all though, the Devatrons couldn't use *The Doombringer* for battle or any other mission until it was repaired and fully functional again. Devion sat in his throne, tapping the arms with his claws and fuming to himself.

"How did the Mobians manage to do this level of damage to my ship?" he wondered "All the Royal Fighters were down on the ground and they did not appear to have explosive weapons on them at all. Did they have a surprise attack lying in wait for us? Hardly given how they did not know we were coming. And why have some Mobians left in that wretched little spaceship? If this is the sign for an evacuation then I will be pleased. It's about time the Mobians relinquished their world to me. But then why would they forfeit this forlorn battle after showing such signs of obstinacy and determination? Many questions buzz in my mind and the answers are likely not going to present themselves. The Mobians who left are no matter, they've surrendered so I will let them wallow in their shame. As for the heathen who damaged my ship, I will personally take it upon myself to dissect him limb from limb and piece by piece for doing this to *The Doombringer* !"

He thumped the arms of his throne in fury.

"I cannot lose this battle, especially as we're on the winning streak so far!" he declared "If everything starts going wrong then I'll just produce masses of Devatrons and unleash a planet wide invasion force to destroy everybody. I'll even unleash the Deva-Beast again if I have to. No matter what the Mobians do, they will never win. Their victories will be short-lived and I will emerge victorious like we always have done!"

Then suddenly, the ship's alarm started blaring and Devion looked to see what was setting it off. He pressed a button on his throne and the throne emitted a screen that showed him what was going on

outside. Shadow the Hedgehog was coming towards *The Doombringer* and he was moving at top speed. Devion stared at Shadow in amazement and he couldn't believe what he was saying.

"Well it appears the surprises keep throwing themselves into my direction." he mused "It appears this planet is populated not by one supersonic hedgehog but two. This one looks far more threatening then Sonic does. What power does this creature have in him then? I shall have to battle this creature and see for myself…"

Devion stood up from his throne and he left the cockpit. He was going to fight Shadow and see what he was made of. He began to wonder why he hadn't seen him already but it didn't matter to him. Any new opponent to him was just more exercise for the Devatrons and fresh meat to sink his claws into…

Outside, Shadow arrived at *The Doombringer* at long last and he was pleased to see all the damage he'd done to the ship as he observed its current status. It was in bad shape and it was soon to be an even worse shape once he retrieved the Chaos Emeralds and Chaos Blasted the ship to smithereens. Shadow could see that *The Doombringer* had hundreds of Devatrons working on the ship like crazy, trying desperately to get it fixed and operational again as quickly as they possibly could. But as great at building as they were, even the Devatrons wouldn't be able to fix the ship and get it working again in a short amount of time. They'd be working for a while at most. Shadow couldn't help but smirk at the damaged ship and feel grand for having done this amount of carnage to it.

"Looks like I hit that thing pretty hard." said Shadow "Well my Chaos Blast is notoriously powerful after all and I am the ultimate life form so it's not hard to see how I pulled that off. That thing won't survive another Chaos Blast from me once I retrieve the Chaos Emeralds and finish it off."

Shadow, despite his arrogance, chose not to run straight into *The Doombringer* for there were hundreds of Devatrons out working on the ship and if he ran straight into the ship, he risked getting spotted by them and he didn't want to get spotted and shot at since he had a

mission to do and he could do without distraction. So instead, Shadow chose to sneak up to *The Doombringer* as quietly as he could and then teleport onto the ship. Shadow warped away into thin air and he reappeared on *The Doombringer* out of the sight of any Devatron soldiers on duty. Shadow looked around and he noticed he was in a corridor that was located in a section of the ship that hadn't been damaged. Now Shadow was on the ship, he skated off down the corridor on his jet shoes, keeping his senses alert and looking out for any Devatrons out there.

"Right…if I was a planet conquering robot…where would I keep a mystical emerald if I stole it off my enemies?" wondered Shadow.

He began to think to himself on the possible places the Chaos Emeralds could possibly be kept in. Where on this massive vessel could the Devatrons possibly be hiding the Chaos Emeralds? If he had to tear the entire ship apart just to find the Chaos Emeralds then Shadow would happily do so without a moment's hesitance. The Chaos Emeralds were too valuable to destroy and there had to be a way to re-power them so Shadow was determined to find them before he destroyed *The Doombringer* and put an end to the Devatrons once and for all. Shadow then suddenly had a good idea on where the Chaos Emeralds could possibly be in the ship.

"Maybe…the Chaos Emeralds are being kept in the cockpit." thought Shadow "The cockpit seems to be a station base for the Devatrons, especially as there's a throne in it that has the Devatron database. They've probably kept them in the cockpit. I'll search there for the Chaos Emeralds."

Shadow then decided to teleport again as he was running down the corridor. He reappeared on an upper floor of *The Doombringer* and continued running down another corridor Shadow's teleportation had limited range so he couldn't just warp straight up to the cockpit of *The Doombringer* in the blink of an eye. He had to teleport up to the floors one at a time until he reached the top floor. Shadow teleported yet again and he reappeared on another floor of *The Doombringer* . The ship had many floors and Shadow had a few left to get up before he reached the top floor. But Shadow would be going no further. Shadow ran down the corridor but before he could teleport again, he heard footsteps and he skidded to a halt, wondering what

he was going to come across. To his misfortune, it was none other then Devion who just happened to be coming down the corridor Shadow had just appeared on. Devion stopped in his tracks and he glowered ominously at Shadow with his creepy V-shaped visor. His visor narrowed down to an evil slit of pure fury.

"Welcome to my ship hedgehog." purred Devion "The ship's sensors are still active despite the damage it's received so I saw you coming before you even arrived."

"Is that so?" sneered Shadow "Well then, you saw me coming but will you see what I've got planned for you coming?"

"I have seen many surprising things in my life Mobian." said Devion "And you are one of them. Your structure and appearance almost mirrors Sonic the Hedgehog's perfectly. The fur colour and your quill style are your defining features, as well as your sense of footwear."

"I'll take those as compliments." said Shadow "I'm Shadow the Hedgehog, a genetic experiment with a lost purpose and I'm here to stop you conquering Mobius so that I may continue to search for answers to my past. After all, if you conquer Mobius then you'll prevent me from ever finding out who I really am."

"So you're a genetic experiment?" mused Devion "The surprises continue to fall down from the heavens it seems. Either way, let's not stand on ceremony here Shadow the Hedgehog. If you wish to refute us so that you may continue your supposed "quest" then I will have to personally eviscerate you piece by piece. Maybe I should slice you open and find out what you are then genetic experiment."

"And maybe I should blow you to pieces and see what makes you Devatrons tick!" yelled Shadow "I've critically damaged your ship and I won't hesitate to blow you away Devatron!"

"You shall refer to me as Devion." said Devion coldly, removing his cloak and dropping it down onto the floor "I am the leader of the Devatron race and I am pleased to hear that you are the one who damaged my ship. Now I know whose life to take for this appalling crime against the Devatrons!"

That did it. Shadow lunged at Devion, snarling loudly and he spin-dashed Devion directly in the gut. The spin-dash sent Devion hurling backwards but Devion threw his legs backwards so he ended up landing on his feet and skidding to a halt down the corridor. Devion glared at Shadow and he bent down in a battle ready stance.

"Such a vigorous blow from such a small creature." he muttered "You're like Sonic doubled in the realms of strength Shadow. That just means you will be a more interesting and entertaining challenge for me."

"Will you be saying those words when I rip your circuits out?!" growled Shadow.

He summoned a Chaos Spear to his hand and he threw it at Devion's visor but Devion held his arms up in front of his visor to block his attack. The Chaos Spear hit Devion's arms and ricocheted off of them. Devion lowered his arms and he began to sneer again.

"Your powers are of the mystical variety." he said "You shall be a fine prize for me genetic experiment whose appearance mirrors that of a Mobian. Whoever created you must have been a man of commendable intelligence and scientific skills."

Shadow just ran up to Devion and began throwing Chaos Spears at him. Devion twirled around and the Chaos Spears ricocheted off of him as they hit him and just as Shadow ran up to Devion, Devion twirled around and sucker-punched the black hedgehog directly in the face. Shadow was thrown across the corridor by that punch and he landed slap bang near the wall. Shadow groaned in pain and he rubbed his throbbing face better. Devion deployed his arm cannons and he began to shoot at Shadow. Some shots managed to hit him but Shadow took them because of his strong build and he stood back up. But Devion shot him near his feet and the blast sent him hurling down the corridor. Shadow landed on his face and came to a halt further down the corridor. He groaned in pain and he picked himself up. Devion began blasting at him again but Shadow teleported out of Devion's way and he reappeared behind him. He then proceeded to punch Devion in the back of his head and knock him down onto the floor. Devion picked himself up and he retaliated with a roundhouse punch to the jaw. The two then lunged at each

other and they linked arms with one another. The two fighters then glared into each other's eyes.

"You seem to have the ability to teleport too." said Devion "You creator must have been an impressive individual to have created a false Mobian with powers like this. How did he achieve this feat?"

"I don't know." said Shadow "I don't even know who my creator is. But I'm glad he gave me these powers to that I may destroy my enemies!"

He then teleported again and reappeared behind Devion but because Devion knew what was coming, he managed to avoid getting hit and turned around and walloped Shadow across the face. Shadow was thrown down onto his hands and knees and he grunted in pain. Devion kicked Shadow as viciously as he could and he knocked Shadow into the wall.

"Repeating your own battle tactics is not going to accomplish anything in this fight." crowed Devion "All you are doing is making yourself predictable and I will see your every move coming."

"Thanks for the hint Devion!" sneered Shadow "Now you're making it easier for me to defeat you!"

With that said, Shadow leaped back up onto his feet and he uppercut Devion in the beak. Shadow then let lose a flurry of roundhouse punches to Devion's upper body and he actually managed to get the Devatron leader to back away a little. But Devion was soon back on the offensive. Shadow was punching him as hard as he could but given Devion's invulnerable chrome body, he didn't even feel the punches. Devion then fought back with a flurry of punches of his own. He roundhouse punched Shadow in the jaw and then he punched him above his eyebrow. Shadow gripped his head in pain, giving Devion the perfect opportunity to gut punch Shadow and then backhand him across his forehead. Shadow growled furiously and he began to punch Devion as furiously as he could but Devion took the blows as if they were nothing (which to him, they were nothing) and he kicked Shadow as hard as he could. Shadow tried to pick himself up but Devion kicked him up into the air and then he punched Shadow before he could fall back down to the

floor. Shadow hurtled across the corridor and he skidded to a halt further down it. Devion ran towards Shadow and just as Shadow stood back up, Devion grabbed Shadow, spun around and threw him back up the corridor. Shadow landed sharply on his shoulder and he cried out in pain, clutching his arm and grimacing tensely. Devion advanced on Shadow and Shadow picked himself up. He roared a ferocious battle cry of anger and he lunged at Devion. He uppercut Devion and then roundhouse kicked him in the legs but not enough to trip him up. Shadow jumped up and rapidly kicked Devion in the gut, forcing the Devatron soldier to back away and then he back flipped away from Devion and spin-dashed him as hard as he could. Devion hurtled backwards but he landed on his feet again and skidded to a halt. Shadow zoomed towards Devion but Devion leaped over him and dropkicked him as he hurled over him, knocking him down onto the floor. Devion then picked Shadow up by his quills and he slammed him into the wall.

"Your fighting style mimics that of Sonic's only much more vigorous and with mystical powers added." sneered Devion "Fighting you is just like fighting Sonic only with some extra features. No wonder this fight is going in my favour."

"It won't be for long!" cried Shadow.

He kicked Devion in the gut but he didn't even feel the pitiful kick. Devion just continued pinning Shadow against the wall as Shadow tried to get free.

"Pummel me to your heart's content if you so desire." crooned Devion "I cannot feel your blows. I am nigh-invulnerable and only the strongest of people will ever excel in inflicting harm on me. You, Sonic and his pitiful friends are among those who do not have enough power to harm me. Only Eggman's giant silver machine has hurt me but he is not here so he cannot help you now."

"I don't need help!" yelled Shadow.

He summoned a Chaos Spear to his hand but Devion quickly threw him away before he could throw it into his visor. This caused Shadow to drop the Chaos Spear where it ended up just hitting the floor and disappearing. Shadow picked himself up and he swiped his

arm, sending several Chaos Spears whizzing towards Devion. Devion just ducked, causing the spears to miss, and he ran towards Shadow. Shadow ran towards Devion but instead of attacking him, he leaped over Devion, grabbed the sword handle and he unsheathed Devion's sword from his backpack. Shadow landed just behind Devion and the Devatron leader turned around to see that Shadow had his sword. That wasn't going to be a problem for Devion since even Devatron weapons couldn't hurt a Devatron but if Shadow plunged it into his visor or aimed for his neck then Shadow would kill him so he had to retrieve it. Shadow lunged at Devion and he sliced upwards with the sword. The attack didn't harm Devion. Shadow then slashed at Devion as ferociously as he could with the sword and he was forcing the Devatron to back away due to how viciously he was attacking him. Devion took all the blows though and the only damage Shadow was leaving on him were mere scratches that could easily be buffed. Shadow then aimed at Devion's visor but Devion bent over backwards to dodge the attack and he clasped his hands over the sword blade. He straightened up again with the sword blade still clamped between his hands and Shadow tried to yank it out of his grip. But Devion's grip was too much for Shadow. Devion kept the sword blade clamped between his hands and Shadow just pitifully tried to yank it out of the Devatron's grasp. Devion gave the sword a mighty tug and he yanked it out of Shadow's hands. Devion now had his weapon back and he pointed it at Shadow.

"Your thinking on the battlefield is admirable genetic one." purred Devion "Commendable…but ultimately futile. Even our own weapons cannot harm us and aiming for my visor is not an option for you for I am much harder to take down then an actual soldier."

"Do you ever shut up?!" yelled Shadow, roundhouse punching Devion in the face and making him stagger backwards.

Devion just turned his head back around after that powerful punch to the face and he cricked his neck.

"Such pathetic comebacks." muttered Devion "I've had half forms bombard me with better taunts and comebacks."

Shadow was beginning to get mad now. It was quite clear that

Devion was insulting him on purpose just to make him mad and it was working because those insults were really getting under his skin now. He should know better then to get mad in a battle though since that was likelier to get him defeated then actually ensure his victory. Shadow spin-dashed towards Devion but Devion leaped out of the way, leaving Shadow to spin-dash the wall and ricochet straight off of it. Shadow uncurled from his spin-dash and he skidded across the floor to a halt. Shadow growled furiously and he spin-dashed towards Devion again. Devion sheathed his sword and he backhanded Shadow just as he was hurling towards him. Shadow uncurled from his spin-dash and he bounced off the wall with his feet. Shadow then swung his feet up and he landed feet first on Devion's face. That attack brought Devion down onto his back and Shadow jumped off of him as he hit the floor. Devion picked himself up but Shadow spin-dashed him in the back and knocked him down onto the floor. Shadow did a great big U-turn and he came back towards Devion. He spin-dashed Devion again and threw him over onto his back. Shadow uncurled from his spin-dash and he skidded to a halt yet again. Devion picked himself up and Shadow spin-dashed at him again. Devion held his hands up and he caught Shadow in them. Shadow tried to push Devion back but the Devatron stood his ground and managed to hold the spin-dashing hedgehog at arm's length away from him. Devion cackled maniacally and he spun around a full 360 degrees and he hurled Shadow down the corridor as if the black hedgehog was merely a baseball being thrown to the batter. Shadow whooshed down the corridor and he kept on going for quite a while until he eventually came to a halt about fifty feet down the corridor. Shadow uncurled from his spin-dash and he growled in annoyance. He then teleported but Devion predicted where he was going to show up so he leaped backwards before Shadow could reappear. Shadow reappeared in the exact spot that Devion had predicted him to, which was directly in front of where he had been before leaping back, and Devion launched a sucker punch at Shadow. He hit Shadow in the middle of his face and he knocked Shadow down onto the floor. Devion then stomped on Shadow's stomach and the hedgehog screamed in pain. Devion cackled and he stomped on his stomach again, this stomp being much harder then the first. Devion was about to stomp on him again but Shadow teleported yet again. Devion, again, predicted where Shadow was going to reappear and he stepped to

the side. Shadow reappeared in the spot Devion had been in and Devion uppercut Shadow in the side of his head, sending the black hedgehog flying into a wall. Shadow regained himself and he threw some Chaos Spears at Devion. The spears all ricocheted off of Devion's armour and Devion retaliated by shooting at him with his arm cannons. Shadow dodged all the shots and he fired a Chaos Spear at Devion's arm cannons. The spear hit his right arm cannon and it made Devion flinch in pain as if firing the spear at his arm cannon hurt him in someway. Devion then adjusted the settings of his arm cannon from laser to cannonball and he fired a laser cannonball at Shadow. Shadow teleported out of the way, leaving the ball to crash into the wall and blow a giant hole in it. Shadow reappeared in front of Devion and just before he could fall down to the floor, he roundhouse kicked Devion but Devion leaned back to avoid the kick and the tip of Shadow's shoe literally scraped the surface of Devion's visor, leaving a think mark over it that was barely noticeable. Shadow dropped down to the floor and he tripped Devion up with a kick to the legs. Devion landed on his back and Shadow grabbed Devion by the ankles. He swung Devion around and he threw him into the wall near the hole that Devion had made. Then Shadow lunged at Devion and he halted in mid-air just directly in front of him. Then Shadow proceeded to unleash a flurry of attacks in Devion's face, kicking and punching and flipping around as he did so. The attacks left Devion staggering backwards and clutching his face, which now had more glaring scratches from all the kicks and his visor had several scratches across it too. He could still see however since the scratches weren't over the holographic eye in the middle. Devion felt the scratches on his face and he growled ominously to himself.

"Such power and such endurance." he purred "I give him the best I got and he still stands and continues to unleash vigorous onslaughts against me. I simply must find out what created this thing. Shadow's a genius invention I must begrudgingly admit."

Shadow lunged at Devion yet again but Devion backhanded him directly through the hole in the wall and sent him hurling out of *The Doombringer* and into the grassy ground outside. Devion threw himself out of the hole in the wall he made earlier and he almost landed on top of Shadow but Shadow got back up just in time to

move. Devion landed on the ground and the force of his landing threw Shadow off his feet. Shadow rolled over onto his hands and knees and he picked himself up. The Devatrons stopped working and they all stared at Devion & Shadow as they prepared to continue fighting. Raicor stepped forward and he wondered if he should join in or not. Devion turned to face the Devatrons and he barked at them.

"Do not let this battle divert your focus!" he ordered "Continue working! I will finish off this failed Sonic the Hedgehog duplicate before he wrecks the whole ship!"

What Devion meant by "failed Sonic clone" was the fact Shadow was clearly similar looking to Sonic but he had some differences to stop him looking exactly like Sonic and Devion was merely mocking Shadow for that. That did it. Shadow lunged at Devion and he let loose another flurry of attacks that made the Devatron stagger backwards.

"I. am. not. a. Sonic. clone!" he roared as he let Devion have it "I am over fifty years old, I was created long before Sonic ever existed so I'm not the faker out the two!"

Shadow then walloped Devion and knocked him backwards. Devion picked himself up, his face laden with even more scratches now.

"So you're fifty years old?" mused Devion "You must be ageless then because your age isn't a prominent feature on you. Still, Sonic is a real live Mobian and you are a genetic experiment so you are clearly the fake hedgehog Shadow. Merely existing first does not legitimately make you the real supersonic hedgehog. You're a creation. Your life is a lie. You were created for some purpose or another so I do not see how you can protest against any claims of you being a "faker" when it's quite clear you are."

Devion may look like he's signing his death warrant here but you see, this was his plan. Make Shadow as angry as possible and wear him down to the bone and then finish him off. It was bound to work too since Shadow had a fiery temper and he was losing it and fast. Shadow roared furiously and he threw himself at Devion but Devion dodged his attack and he elbowed Shadow in the back of the head,

knocking him down to the ground. Shadow tried to pick himself up but Devion grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and he hurled Shadow across the meadow that surrounded New Mobotropolis. Shadow hurled through the air and he landed down onto the grassy grounds beneath him. He skidded to a painful halt and he groaned in pain. Devion ran over to Shadow and just as Shadow stood back up, Devion began whaling on him as viciously as he could. Shadow found himself being pummelled relentlessly by Devion and he could hardly fight back due to how fast Devion was throwing his punches. Devion then slugged Shadow in the stomach and Shadow gasped ever so hoarsely. Shadow felt like Devion had just punched his way through his gut due to how powerful it was. Devion then proceeded to give Shadow an upwards kick that sent him hurling through the air and crashing down onto the ground. Shadow groaned in pain and he rubbed his throbbing gut. Devion advanced on him again.

"You claim to be the one who damaged my ship Shadow." sneered Devion "Well you've failed to convince me so far. Perhaps you're trying to make yourself sound impressive when really you're not? All you've proven to me is that you're merely a Sonic clone with some extra powers, nothing more."

"If…if you want to see how powerful I really am…" growled Shadow, removing his inhibitor rings and getting back to his feet "Then allow me to show you…how much power…I CONTAIN!"

He then began to tense up and his body began to glow a bright crimson red colour as his Chaos Blast began to build up. Devion could sense that Shadow was beginning to unleash his true power at last. Shadow became engulfed in a bright red aurora as the Chaos Energy in his body prepared to unleash from within.

"Chaos…" began Shadow.

But just before Shadow could even release the power, Devion uppercut him into the air and sent him hurling away from him. Just as Shadow was smacked into the air, he unleashed the power within him.

" **BLAAAAAASSSSSSTTTTTT!** " cried Shadow, unleashing the power within as he was hurling through the air.

A bright red blast of energy came out from Shadow and went on for a few feet, Devion leaping back before the attack could get him. Shadow landed on the ground a good few feet away from where he once stood, the Chaos Blast making a crater as he landed. The Chaos Blast eventually died down and Shadow was left lying in the crater, tired out and gasping for breath. Devion was impressed by the whole thing and he wondered over to Shadow's crater. He saw Shadow lying there in the centre, trying to pick himself up. Devion leaped down into the crater and he stood before Shadow, the black hedgehog finally getting back up.

"So once you remove your wrist rings you can unleash a massive surge of energy?" said Devion "Now I am impressed with you genetic experiment. Makes me wonder why you didn't just do that in the first place and wipe me out already."

"Because…I wish to…retrieve the stolen Chaos Emeralds first…" explained Shadow "After I'd done that…I was going to Chaos Blast your ship again…and kill you all!"

"Well you will not be able to do that Shadow." crowed Devion "For I shall now take you prisoner and I will take it upon myself to dissect you and find out what I can about you. Who created you and what more are you capable of?"

"You will not take me!" yelled Shadow.

Shadow launched a feeble punch at Devion but Devion grabbed his fist and squeezed it, making Shadow scream in pain.

"You appear to have weakened." Devion observed "It seems removing your rings and using your Chaos Blast weakens you. Am I right to guess that if you reattached your rings you will power back up?"

"Yes!" grunted Shadow, trying to yank his fist out of Devion's grasp.

"Well I shall make sure you never retrieve your rings." said Devion "Now Shadow, you have put up a valiant fight but you, like all people who have dared to face me, have fallen. And now I shall take you to *The Doombringer* and perform some experiments on you…"

He then proceeded to smack Shadow around the head as hard as he could, the resulting smack knocking Shadow clean out. Shadow slumped onto the ground, completely unconscious now from the smack to the head and the fact he didn't have his inhibitor rings on. Devion scooped up Shadow's body and draped him over his shoulder. He carried Shadow back over to *The Doombringer* and he began to talk to himself.

"I suppose I should do something about the Royal Fighters to prevent them from trying to rescue you." he mused to himself "No doubt once they realize you've been gone for too long, they'll inevitably try to rescue you and get in my way again. So I shall prevent help from coming…"

He arrived at *The Doombringer* and he barked at the sub-leaders who were all working on fixing the ship.

"Tronic! Triton! Steelor! Raicor!" he barked "I have a task for you four!"

"What is the task that you wish to give us the honour of carrying out for you then?" droned Tronic, saluting Devion loyally.

"You all know where the Royal Fighters reside now." said Devion "I want you all to take a squad of twenty soldiers and go over Empire City and destroy the Royal Fighters so they cannot mount a rescue and attempt to save Shadow while I experiment on him."

"We shall do just that." droned Tronic "We will not fail you Devion."

Devion nodded, knowing that he could count on Tronic to carry out a simple task and succeed and he wondered back into *The Doombringer* while the sub-leaders began to round up their squad. Devion couldn't wait to find out what he could about Shadow. Who was he? What was his origin? What created him and what power does he contain in him? Once he'd found out, he could probably use the information to make his own genetic experiment and use them as a form of trickery to lower down his victim's guards and make his battles easier to win when he attempted to conquer any other planet out there…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story* 105**

**** And then see *Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius* Story 110**

Last Attempt at Victory 2

Arc 13: Last Attempt at Victory

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 111-113

Part 2: Imprisoned Shadow

While Shadow had been fighting Devion over at *The Doombringer* , the Royal Fighters had all gone back to the Empire Research Centre in Empire City and they were all waiting for Shadow to return. Bunnie Rabbot was having her robot arm fixed by Dr. Eggman. Shadow had come up with a brilliant idea to wipe out the Devatrons and get back the Chaos Emeralds. This idea was him going over to *The Doombringer* to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds and once he'd done that, he was going to Chaos Blast *The Doombringer* , which had already been grievously damaged by Shadow earlier, and destroy the Devatrons once and for all. Unfortunately, Shadow ended up fighting Devion and Devion had defeated him and captured him and was now going to experiment on him. The Royal Fighters were sitting around in the lab waiting for Shadow to return and while they had been waiting, Sally used the computer monitors of the lab to contact Sonic & Tails. Sonic & Tails were up in space in *The Silver Bullet* and ready to go off to Sram, a Devatron conquered planet that was populated by robots called The Startrons, cousins of the Devatrons. Sally was lucky to have called them because the two were just about to jump into hyperspace and head off to the planet.

"Sonic? Tails? Can you hear me?" asked Sally "Are you two alright?"

"We're A-OK Sal." came the voice of Sonic the Hedgehog "I've really got to say that space is more amazing then you'd think it is. It's way past cool up here!"

"I can imagine it is." said Sally "So are you two preparing to go off to the Startron planet?"

"We are your majesty." said Tails "With the aid of my USB drive, I've uploaded Sram's coordinates from the data we downloaded into the ship's navigational systems. We're just preparing to jump into hyperspace now."

"Well it seems I was lucky enough to call you two then." said Sally "Well, I wish you two the best of luck and…"

Before Sally could finish off, Amy Rose pushed her aside and spoke to Sonic & Tails. She was just eager to have her say in this.

"Sonic, we all wish you luck in your adventure and you'd better come back alive or we'll never win this stinkin' war!" she exclaimed.

"Don't sweat it Amy." said Sonic casually "I'll be back before you can say "Knothole."

"That's what I like to hear." said Amy happily "And don't worry about us Sonic, we'll be fine. Especially as we have Shadow helping us."

"Whoever said I was?" said Sonic snidely "I know you'll all hold on until me and Tails return. You guys are the greatest and if there's anyone I can count on to do my job for me, it's all the friends I have."

The statement really touched everybody. It just shows how highly Sonic thinks of them and how much he cares for everybody. Sally took over from Amy and spoke to Sonic.

"We're all touched by your statement Sonic." said Sally "Thank you."

"No problem Sal." said Sonic "I've gotta go now though, we're preparing to activate the hyper-drive. See ya later everybody and remember, you're all way past cool…"

Sonic's voice trailed off as Tails shut off the comlink and activated the hyper-drive on *The Silver Bullet* . Sally switched off the monitor's comlink and she turned around to face the others.

"Well luckily, it seems Sonic & Tails are doing well and they're off to their destination." said Sally brightly "Let us hope their journey won't be in vain."

"If Mr. "I'm-the-Ultimate-Life-form" succeeds in his mission then their journey will have been all for nothing!" snorted Marik the Martian grouchily "Speaking of that stuck-up git in hedgehog's clothing, where is he?! He's been gone for an hour already! You'd think that someone as powerful as he claims to be would have completed his mission and be back by now!"

"Marik, even the strongest of people can't accomplish things in the blink of an eye." noted Cosmo the Seedrian "The Devatrons are stronger then all of us and they haven't conquered Mobius already so don't expect Shadow to complete his mission so soon just because he's so powerful…"

"And how would you know anything about being powerful Cosmo?" snarled Marik "You're pathetic and weak so you can't claim to know anything about strength and power!"

"Stop being mean to Cosmo Marik!" yelled Amy, summoning her hammer to her hand and itching to bash Marik with it "She's only suggesting why Shadow hasn't come back yet! Honestly, do you get annoyed by everything she does and anything she says?"

Marik didn't answer that as he thought it was a stupid question. Instead he folded his arms, turned his back on everybody and fumed to himself.

"Thank you for sticking up for me." said Cosmo.

"Anytime Cosmo." said Amy casually.

"I for one am concurring with little rosebud." said Geoffrey St. John "Shadow maybe a powerful lad but our combined efforts were more then enough to wear him down until he needed to Chaos Blast us*. I dread to think what would happen if Shadow ended up getting in a fight with a whole bunch of Devatrons, the poor bloke would end up getting overwhelmed!"

"No he wouldn't." said Knuckles the Echidna "He'd just Chaos Blast them all. Even though they're invulnerable I bet the force of the blast would shatter their visors and then fry the inside of their heads."

"But Shadow can't do that since he's trying to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds." noted Shade the Echidna "If he did get into a fight with the Devatrons while onboard that ship of theirs and Chaos Blasted them, he might destroy the ship and the Chaos Emeralds all at once."

"Oh yeah." said Knuckles, rubbing his forehead with an irritated expression on his face "So Shadow best hope he's fighting the Devatrons outside of the ship instead of inside."

"I think you're all worrying too much." said Dr. Eggman "Shadow was a very helpful ally for me when he used to be on my side so I highly doubt that he's going to be in any need of assistance at this moment."

"I agree with Eggman, as much as I'm reluctant to." said Rouge the Bat.

"That's what we'd all like to think Eggman." said Sally "But Shadow's been gone for an hour and I'm beginning to feel uneasy about this. He might be in trouble and we might need to help him."

"Well I think we should do just that your highness." snickered Marik with a big toothy grin on his face that would please the Cheshire Cat "After all, Shadow was arrogant enough to think he could do this by himself and once we show up to help him, I can make him feel like such a fool! Hee, hee, hee!"

"You will do nothing of the sort Marik." muttered Sally "There's no reason to mock somebody because they got in over their heads. Besides, do you want him to break your arm again**?"

Marik began to quiver in rage. Sonic and friends didn't half rile him when they reminded him of the time Shadow broke his arm. Marik pointed sharply at Sally and resisted the urge to electrocute her on the spot just for mentioning that.

"Do not bring up that embarrassing moment Sally or you'll end up staining the floors with your blood!" he snarled.

"Dare touch the queen and the Chaotix will beat the living crap outta

you!" growled the Chaotix leader Vector the Crocodile, cupping his hand around his fist.

"All this quarrelling is meaningless anyway." said Espio the Chameleon "We should be seeing how Shadow's doing, not starting arguments."

"Uh…that's just what I was gonna say!" lied Charmy "We should do something, not just sit around like morons!"

"Then let's not waste anymore time and go over to New Mobotropolis." said Sally "We'll see if Shadow is in need of help or not once we arrive."

"Um…Sally-girl? Ah think that might be a bit of a problem." said Bunnie Rabbot nervously.

"Why?" asked Sally.

"Because the Devatrons are coming to Empire City!" shrieked Ruben the Water Panther who was with Bunnie.

Eggman had finished fixing Bunnie's arm and after he'd finished, Bunnie and Ruben had decided to have a look out and see if anything was happening and to their shock, Raicor, Steelor, Triton & Tronic were all coming towards Empire City with twenty soldiers backing them up. They all marched towards Empire City like an ominous troop of metal soldiers and they were ready to unleash hell on the city once they arrived. The Royal Fighters all ran out of the centre and they watched as the Devatrons advanced towards the city with their weapons at the ready. Poor Sally looked like she was going to faint with shock at the mere sight of them.

"Oh my gosh!" she shrieked "The Devatrons are coming!"

"Yipe!" yelped Wilson the Dog "They've come here to terminate us and probably take over this city too! Oh no!"

"Well if those Devatrons are coming over to annihilate us then we can safely assume that Shadow failed his mission unfortunately." muttered Dr. Eggman "If he had succeeded then this bunch wouldn't even be coming to us right now."

"Well he tried, that's what really counts." said Mandy Mouse, slipping on her brass knuckle attachments "Shadow may have failed but we won't fail to stop this lot from destroying EmpireCity! Let's go team!"

"We've already lost New Mobotropolis, we can't afford to lose this city too!" said Nicole the Lynx "We've gotta stop those Devatrons before they get here!"

With that said, the Royal Fighters all charged towards the oncoming Devatrons. Eggman stayed put and instead sent Metal Sonic & Katherine out to join them since he couldn't fight and those two were doing the fighting for him. This maybe a foolish thing to do but the Royal Fighters really needed to keep hold of Empire City. After losing New Mobotropolis & Knothole, they couldn't afford to lose another place of sanctuary and if Shadow had failed his mission to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds and destroy the Devatrons then he'd need saving so they had to stop the Devatrons and then save Shadow…

Meanwhile, Devion had taken Shadow to, what many considered, the scariest room on *The Doombringer* . And that was the science lab. That too had been untouched by the Chaos Blast so Devion could use this lab to perform his experiments on Shadow. The lab itself was a rather eerie place with lots of wires hanging from the ceiling, dark lighting, tools of torture hanging on the walls, ferocious looking machinery and lots of restraint beds for the unfortunate victims who had to experience this nightmare. Shadow had only just begun to come around but it was already too late. Devion lay Shadow down on the bed and he clamped some cuffs around his wrists and ankles. Even if he still had his inhibitor rings on, Shadow wouldn't be able to break free from these restraints but that didn't stop him from trying. Shadow wriggled and writhed and he pulled on his limbs but he just couldn't break free. These kind of restraints were strong enough to hold even a Devatron soldier. Devion leaned forward and he glowered ominously into Shadow's red eyes.

"Cease your futile efforts to break free." said Devion "These restraints could hold one of my soldiers quite easily. You'll never break free."

"So you think!" yelled Shadow "What's to stop me from simply warping myself outta these?"

Shadow then attempted to teleport out of his restraints…but nothing happened. He tried again but nothing happened. Shadow didn't understand what was happening. Why couldn't he teleport? He then realized something. He'd removed his inhibitor rings to unleash a Chaos Blast earlier. Maybe without the inhibitor rings he couldn't even teleport. Shadow groaned in annoyance to himself.

"If only I hadn't attempted to Chaos Blast you!" he grumbled "Then I wouldn't be in this mess!"

"So it appears that you've lost your ability to dematerialize and materialize at will courtesy of the removal of your wrist mounted rings." purred Devion "How fortunate I am to be against a creature of such weaknesses."

"You let me outta these cuffs and I'll show you "weaknesses"!" threatened Shadow.

"Need I remind you who emerged victorious in our battle earlier?" crowed Devion "If I do release you of your binds you'll just end up getting beaten again. Now silence those lips of yours while I get to work on you."

"What are you gonna do to me?!" asked Shadow, not showing any signs of fear at all.

"Experiment on you." said Devion, wondering over to a desk counter that was laden with terrible tools and instruments of torture "I wish to find out what created you and how you have been equipped with such power. I cannot simply interrogate you and make you tell me since you claim to not even know who your creator is so I'll find out by using other methods."

He picked up a wicked looking syringe with a long thin needle and he wondered back over to Shadow with the syringe in hand. Shadow just scowled at Devion and he tried to break free. His efforts were futile and he could not do anything to stop Devion from using the syringe on him. Devion plunged the needle into Shadow's arm and

he pulled on the plunger. Shadow cringed as the needle pricked his arm but he didn't cry out in pain. The needle sucked up some of Shadow's blood, which curiously enough was green in colour. Devion looked at the syringe and he thought to himself about the curious colour of it.

"All Mobians bleed red blood." he said to himself "Why do you have green blood?"

"Because I'm not Mobian!" retorted Shadow "I'm a genetic experiment that was created fifty years ago by someone whose name and face I wish I could remember."

"That just provokes the curious question on why your creator made you in the image of a Mobian?" mused Devion "The whole thing is hardly…logical. Let's see what I can find out from this blood sample."

So Devion wandered over to a machine that was as tall as he was, coloured a dirty bronze, and looked very hi-tech in appearance. This machine was used for scanning things and there were holes in it for the syringes to go in. It even had compartments for other kinds of samples to scan like skin or fur or even internal organs (Devatrons scan a lot of gross things). Devion inserted the syringe into the machine and the machine drained the syringe of its components. After doing so it began to run a scan on the blood sample and Devion looked at the screen so see what the result was. The screen fuzzed for a little while until finally flashing with results. To Devion's surprise, the screen was displaying the results he didn't quite see coming. He read the screen aloud and was surprised at what the result was.

"Fascinating." he purred "Your blood is not of Mobian origin. Your DNA contains Mobian DNA and you appear to have some of the power the Chaos Emeralds contained in your blood stream according to the report. But your DNA mostly consists of DNA from another life form. And it is a life form that we Devatrons have not encountered before. The machine doesn't even know what DNA this is. So what created you?"

"Why does it matter to you?" asked Shadow.

"If your creator is skilled enough to create a false Mobian then I dread to think what would happen if your creator tried to make a false Devatron or something." explained Devion "Not to mention I want to find your creator and force him to join my side so he may make clones of other species for me. A false being maybe useful for me and my forces in future conquests after all."

"Well you can't get that information outta me because I don't even know who my creator is!" yelled Shadow "Even if I did know who my creator was I wouldn't tell you!"

"I gathered that much." muttered Devion "Either way, I must do more extensive study of you and see if I can find out who's blood runs through your veins as the results clearly state to me that you do not have Mobian blood flowing through them."

This all began to give Shadow thoughts. His blood wasn't Mobian blood. That definitely meant he wasn't created on Mobius. But why was he here then? And why does he resemble a Mobian? Why does he have partial Mobian DNA? He had no idea but Devion's experiment was clearly going to help him in his quest for the truth in someway or another. Thanks to Devion, he knew he couldn't find the answers on Mobius since he apparently is not of Mobian origin. But all this still presented many questions for him and he had no idea on what the answers could possibly be. He wasn't going to find out by lying around as a prisoner of Devion that's for sure. Shadow had to get out of here but how could he? He couldn't teleport and he couldn't break the restraints so it was quite clear he was stuck here. All he could do was hope the Royal Fighters could help him out of this…

Meanwhile, the Devatrons had reached Empire City but the Royal Fighters were already heading towards them and they could see that. Raicor pulled out his six-pronged staff and he twirled it around, ready for battle. Triton deployed his saw stick, Steelor drew out his weapons and Tronic deployed his blade. The Devatron sub-leaders were all ready for the Royal Fighters. They brandished their weapons and prepared to do battle. The Royal Fighters came to a halt just before the Devatrons and Raicor pointed his staff at them to

make them back off.

"Mobians!" growled Raicor in his trademark grizzly voice "Do the sensible thing and refrain from resisting us! You cannot defeat us so do not even attempt to do so! Stand down and be spared or fight us and perish!"

"Raicor, we will never succumb to the likes of you!" yelled Sally "Sonic may not be here to help us but that will not stop us from pushing you back! We've lost New Mobotropolis and Knothole, we are not about to lose Empire City too!"

"Sonic is not here to help you?" mused Triton "Why might that be then woman?"

"We're not gonna tell you that!" Amy yelled, ready to swing her Piko-Piko hammer "All you must know is my Sonic is out of this for a good cause and he'll be back soon to kick all your butts!"

"Why do you fools think so highly of yourselves when you know you're not strong enough to defeat us?" snorted Steelor "Your arrogance is even greater then ours."

"Somehow I doubt that metal heads." said Rouge coyly "And before we start fighting, we would like to know how's Shadow doing?"

"Shadow?" said Raicor "Who is he?"

"Like Sonic, only black and red in colour and a lot more serious." explained Knuckles "And he's also the one who wrecked your ship."

"Ah, we know who you're talking about." said Triton in an eerie tone of voice "Devion's beaten him into submission and is experimenting on him as we speak. I bet you're all planning to rescue him aren't you?"

"Well now we know he needs rescuing we are." said Ruben "And we will plough our way through you all if we have to."

"Illogical: you cannot defeat us." droned Tronic "We are too powerful for you all and now we will destroy you. Devatrons, attack."

The Devatrons instantly obeyed and they charged towards the Royal Fighters. The Royal Fighters charged towards the Devatrons and they all began to have an out-to-out brawl with each other. Nineteen fighters vs. twenty-four Devatrons. The Mobians were outnumbered but not by a lot and they were sure to get through the soldiers. It was the sub leaders that were the ones to worry about. Knuckles and Shade both decided to have a rematch with Raicor and Marik decided to have a rematch with Steelor. Triton went for Metal Sonic & Katherine and Bunnie went for Tronic since she had many a score to settle with him after he'd used her to free Devion from custody***. The rest just fought the twenty foot soldiers that were with them. Knuckles & Shade began to cut loose on Raicor with their attacks. Knuckles punched and uppercut Raicor as hard as he possibly could and Shade Blade-Rushed Raicor as furiously as she could. Raicor blocked all their blows with his wings again and he swiped at them with his staff.

"I beat you two miscreants before, I'll do it again!" growled Raicor, swiping his staff at them again.

"Don't count on THAT Raicor!" yelled Knuckles.

"Just because you beat somebody one time, it doesn't mean you will defeat them a second time!" yelled Shade, blocking Raicor's attack with her blades.

"Shows how intelligent you Mobians are." snorted Raicor, holding Shade's blades in place with his staff.

Then, while holding the staff with one hand, he used his other hand to slug Shade in the stomach and make her double over in pain. He then attempted to stab her but Knuckles pile-dived him in the face and knocked him down onto his back. Knuckles punched Raicor in the face but Raicor pushed him off of himself. He then stood over Knuckles and attempted to stab Knuckles in the chest with his staff but Knuckles grabbed it just behind the blades and held it in place. Raicor pushed on the staff and tried to stab Knuckles but Knuckles was doing a good job of holding the staff in place, preventing Raicor from stabbing him. Shade ran in to help Knuckles and she Blade-Rushed one of Raicor's horns. The attack sliced the horn clean off, leaving Raicor with only one horn and making him look a little funny.

Raicor was livid at Shade for doing that for his horns were a valuable trademark of his and to lose one was like losing something important. Raicor swiped at Shade with his staff but Shade did an incredible bend over backwards to dodge the attack and she straightened up to Blade Rush Raicor in the shoulder. She then leaped up and kicked Raicor in the face, making him stagger backwards and she then tripped him up with a swift kick to the legs. Raicor landed on his back and he groaned in pain. Shade then ran over to help Knuckles back onto his feet.

"Thanks for the save Shade." said Knuckles "You really know how to launch a surprise attack don't you?"

"You're welcome Knuckles." said Shade "And I appreciate your compliment. Now let's take down Raicor together, in the name of AngelIsland!"

"For AngelIsland!" agreed Knuckles "And for my late father!"

The two echidnas both pounced on Raicor but Raicor pushed them back with his staff and they landed on their backs. Raicor put his staff away and decided to rely on his bare hands. Knuckles and Shade both came at Raicor and they threw various attacks at him but Raicor shielded himself with his wings. Raicor then deployed his arm cannons and he blasted Knuckles & Shade with them. The two echidnas were thrown backwards across the battlefield and they landed next to a nearby building. Raicor ran towards the two but Shade swiped the air with her blades and sent a pink wave of energy flying towards Raicor. Raicor shielded himself with his wings again but that was what Shade wanted to happen. The attack was merely a distraction so she and Knuckles could get the drop on him. Raicor uncovered himself only to get a powerful uppercut from Knuckles that almost took his head off. Raicor staggered backwards and Knuckles leaped up into the air and began to rapidly punch Raicor all over his body. Shade ran around from behind and she Blade-Rushed Raicor in the back, hoping to sever his wings off. But Raicor kept his wings clipped together so Shade would have a harder time slicing them off. Knuckles and Shade continued to overwhelm Raicor from both ends.

"What's the matter Raicor?!" taunted Knuckles "Not used to picking

on someone who's actually a match for you?"

He punched Raicor in the face but Raicor grabbed his fist before he could launch another punch and he kicked backwards to knock Shade away.

"Talk during battle is a sign of weakness!" said Raicor, throwing Knuckles into the wall of a nearby house.

"You're one to talk!" said Shade coldly, notifying on how hypocritical Raicor was being "You constantly talk during battle yourself so I guess that means you show signs of weakness too!"

The one thing you must never do is lambaste Raicor and suggest he's showing weakness in anyway. Raicor growled furiously and he backhanded the headband wearing echidna across the battlefield. Shade just picked herself up and deployed her trademark helmet which she hadn't used for quite sometime. Raicor was rather impressed by this bit of technology Shade just displayed for him.

"You have a helmet that can retract into your headband and come out again at anytime?" mused Raicor "Very impressive. You Mobians are definitely full of surprises."

"You'd better believe it." said Shade coldly.

Shade charged towards Raicor with her blades glistening in the warm sunlight. Raicor got out his staff again and he blocked an attack that Shade launched at him with her blades. Shade tried to push Raicor back with her blades but Raicor was much too strong for her. Raicor pushed Shade back and she ended up falling onto her back. Raicor then lunged at her with the staff but before he could plunge it into the echidna's neck, Shade grabbed it and kept it away. Raicor pushed on the staff and because Shade was slightly weaker then Knuckles, it was getting easier to overpower her. But just as Shade's strength was giving in, Knuckles ran towards Raicor, jumped up into the air like a jack-in-the-box and he sucker-punched Raicor in the side of his head, knocking the Devatron down onto his side. Shade quickly leaped back to her feet and she picked up Raicor's staff, which was a lot heavier then she thought it was. She thrust the staff towards Raicor's visor but Raicor swung his arm up

and knocked the staff upwards, throwing Shade's balance off slightly. Raicor picked himself up, grabbed one end of his staff, and swung the staff around with Shade still clinging on to it. He swung the staff around and walloped Knuckles with Shade's body. The two echidnas were sent sprawling and they both groaned in pain. Shade felt like she'd been slammed into a wall due to how hard that attack was and how tough Knuckles' body was. Raicor cackled gratingly at them and he twirled his staff around. He thrust it towards the echidnas but they rolled out of his way, leaped back to their feet and pounced on him once again.

Marik and Steelor both lunged at each other and began throwing their best attacks at one another. Marik slashed at Steelor with his metal claws and then he used an energy wave on the Devatron sub-leader whereas Steelor blocked the energy wave attack with his arms and he slashed at Marik with his trademark handlebar sword. Marik dodged the attack and he leaped up to Steelor's eye height and head butted him in the visor. Steelor staggered backwards and he felt his visor, which had just been cracked. Marik sneered at the crack and he began to feel pleased with himself.

"Here I go again, shattering the hopes of my enemies." he crowed.

"It's going to take more then a cracked visor to hinder me in battle." said Steelor "In case your mind hasn't taken in this fact, I can fight adequately with or without vision so blinding me will be of no use to you."

"I remember that." muttered Marik "So I guess I'll just have to plunge my claws into your visor and give you a good electric shock! That'll bring you down!"

Marik then pointed at Steelor's visor and fired a brilliant jolt of electricity. Steelor ducked to avoid the jolt of electricity but before he could straighten back up, Marik ran up to him and uppercut him directly in the face. Steelor was thrown over onto his back by the uppercut and he groaned in pain. Marik jumped onto Steelor but Steelor backhanded him away before he could land on him. Marik skidded across the ground and he charged back towards Steelor. Steelor activated his saw blade and he swiped at Marik but he narrowly missed as Marik went down onto the ground and slid

directly through his legs. Marik stood back up quickly and Steelor twirled around with his saw blade still spinning. He narrowly missed Marik again and Marik electrocuted him. The electric attack didn't effect Steelor at all and Steelor just promptly slashed at Marik with his handlebar sword. The tips of the blades just managed to catch Marik across his torso and Marik cried in pain. He doubled over and began to grimace. Steelor saw the opportunity to stab Marik but Marik sent an energy wave flying into Steelor's face to keep him back while he tried to get over the pain he was feeling from that slash. Steelor staggered backwards and he growled furiously. Marik ran towards Steelor, fighting to ignore the pain from the cuts he'd just received from the Devatron's sword, and he slashed at the Devatron with his metal claws but the attack had no effect on the Devatron's tough armour. Steelor sheathed his weapons and he grabbed Marik by the neck. He bent Marik forward and he kneed him in the gut as hard as he possibly could. Marik gasped in pain as Steelor's knee slammed into his gut but Steelor wasn't finished yet. Steelor tightened his grip around Marik's neck, hoisted him up off the ground and threw him as far as he possibly could. Marik landed on the ground, skidded across it, and came to a painful halt. Marik winced in pain and he clutched his arm which was stinging like crazy from that skid. Steelor cackled delightedly and he ran over to Marik so he could finish him off. Marik stood back up but Steelor walloped him across the face with a powerful punch that would make Rocky Balboa jealous. Marik was thrown down to the ground again and Steelor clasped his hands together. He slammed Marik on his back as hard as he could and then kicked him over onto his back. Steelor cackled again and he unsheathed his weapons. Marik zapped him in the visor with a jolt of electricity but it was only a little zap and not a proper electric shock so Steelor's visor was unaffected by the zap. Marik picked himself up and he and Steelor lunged for each other.

Metal Sonic and Katherine were preparing to fight Triton but before they did so, Katherine ordered Metal Sonic to do something by playing clips of Dr. Eggman's voice she'd recorded.

"Metal Sonic, you go and save Shadow, I will distract this Devatron." said the clips she played which she'd pieced together to make the sentence.

Metal Sonic obeyed since Katherine had a great idea. The Devatrons would all be distracted by the Royal Fighters so he would be able to fly over to the critically damaged *The Doombringer* and save Shadow without getting hindered by them. Metal Sonic activated his jet pack and he flew up into the sky and straight over the Devatrons. Triton saw Metal Sonic flying away and he had a sneaky feeling on what he was doing. He tried to stop him by using his saw-stick but Katherine sneaked up behind him and grabbed the weapon before he could swing it. Triton just swung the saw-stick, with Katherine holding onto it, and he slammed Katherine onto the ground. He then went back to trying to stop Metal Sonic but Metal Sonic was already out of view, meaning he was too late to stop him. Triton activated his jet pack but before he could take off, Katherine fired some bladed discs into Triton's jetpack. The resulting attack ended up damaging Triton's jetpack and rendering it useless. Triton tried to take off but the discs had damaged the jetpack and it wouldn't work now. Triton couldn't fly after Metal Sonic so he was stuck allowing Metal Sonic to save Shadow. Not that it would be a problem given Devion was still in the ship and he could quite easily destroy Metal Sonic without a problem. Metal Sonic getting away was not going to benefit the Mobians in anyway. Katherine picked herself up and she activated her barrier. She didn't expand the barrier to the sphere shape she usually used, she had the barrier outline her like a skin-tight bodysuit. She looked like she was glowing red all over her body. Now she could fight Triton hand to hand without the barrier stopping her from punching and kicking him and Triton wouldn't be able to damage her. That was not going to stop Triton from trying though. Katherine fired bladed discs as Triton but Triton sliced them all up with his saw stick. Katherine then jumped at Triton and used her drill-attack on him. She struck Triton in the chest and knocked him over. Triton was soon back on his feet in the blink of an eye though and he put his weapon away. Katherine and Triton linked hands with one another and they pushed on each other.

"I bet you're still sore over when I destroyed you the other day****!" crooned Triton "Well I destroyed you before, I will do it again!"

Katherine didn't say anything. Instead, she expanded her barrier and pushed Triton backwards with it. Triton skidded backwards but he

remained standing and he managed to stop himself by digging his claws into the ground. Katherine shortened her barrier back to being a red outline around her and she charged towards Triton. Triton drew out his saw-stick and he slashed at Katherine. The attack didn't damage Katherine of course but it was enough to knock Katherine off her feet. Triton then attempted to attack Katherine again but Katherine fired a bladed-disc at his neck. The disc skimmed Triton's neck and he roared in pain. The neck was another weak point on a Devatron but few people knew that. Katherine analyzed Triton's reaction to being attacked in the neck and she realized that she'd found another weakness on them. Katherine began to fire bladed-discs furiously at Triton but Triton held his saw-stick in front of his face, the saw blade acting like a shield that took all the blows. Triton swiped the air with the saw-stick. The saw blade hurled towards Katherine and it hit her directly in the face. The barrier saved her from any damage but the force of the blow smacked her down onto her back. Triton then picked Katherine up by grabbing her ankles and hoisting her off the ground. He eyed Vector the Crocodile, who was nearby and fighting off a Devatron soldier, and he walloped Vector with Katherine. Vector was thrown onto his side and to add insult to injury, Triton began beating him up with Katherine. He smacked Vector continuously as if he was a fly and Katherine was a fly swatter being used to squash it. Vector rolled out of the way before Triton could whap him again and he chomped Triton on the shoulder. The attack just ended up hurting his teeth and Triton backhanded Vector in the jaw. He then threw Katherine at Vector and the two were sent sprawling on the ground. Vector groaned in pain, clutching his aching jaw and mumbling to himself.

"Ouch! Never bite a Devatron again unless you want to lose all your teeth Vector!" winced Vector "And I never thought Eggman's robots could be used as an effective club!"

Katherine just tried to stand back up, staggering as she did so. Vector picked himself up and he clenched his fists, ready to start pounding Triton into scrap metal. Triton just raised his weapon and dared his opponents to do their worst.

Tronic and Bunnie were in heated combat just like they had been

the other day. Bunnie still resented Tronic for using her like a puppet to free Devion from custody and fix him up so she was determined to smash Tronic to pieces. Tronic slashed at Bunnie with his long thing blade but Bunnie leaped back and she deployed her arm cannon. Even though it had been damaged during the hunting game earlier*****, Dr. Eggman had fixed it during the time Shadow and Devion had been fighting so she was now able to use it again. She shot at Tronic but Tronic deployed his arm cannon and shot the blast, stopping it from hitting him. Bunnie pounded towards Tronic and she drew her arm back. Before she could punch Tronic though, Tronic blasted her in the gut and the Rabbot screeched in pain. She doubled over in pain and Tronic prepared to kill her with his blade. He aimed for her neck and was about to slice her head off. Bunnie quickly defended herself by shooting Tronic in the leg. Tronic groaned a dreary, musical drone as he knelt down and Bunnie began to whale on the Devatron second-in-command as hard as she could.

"Take that, and that, and that!" she screeched "This. is. for. using. me. to. save. Devion!"

She punched Tronic at the hardest her robot arm could possibly punch across the face and torso and then she deployed her arm cannon and blasted him in the gut. The shot didn't hurt Tronic but it made him bend over a little. Bunnie then leaped up into the air and dropkicked Tronic in the face. The resulting kick left a mark on Tronic's forehead and left the Devatron feeling quite dizzy. Bunnie took this perfect moment to uppercut Tronic in the chin and nearly take his entire head off. Tronic staggered and fell onto his back. Bunnie pointed her still-active arm cannon at Tronic's face and prepared to blast him in the visor. But before she could even pull the trigger, Tronic deployed his arm cannon and blasted Bunnie in the arm with it. Bunnie yelped in pain and she clutched her arm. The arm cannon had been damaged beyond use yet again and she gritted her teeth in annoyance.

"Hey! I just got that repaired!" she yelled.

"I do not care." droned Tronic, picking himself up "I shall destroy more then just your arm cannon little cyborg."

He then prepared to blast Bunnie in the face but Bunnie retracted her arm cannon and extended her fist. The fist punched Tronic directly in the face and Tronic ended up accidentally shooting up at the air. Tronic withdrew his arm cannon and decided to just fist fight with Bunnie. Bunnie and Tronic lunged for each other and prepared to beat each other senseless.

As for the others, they were all dealing with the twenty soldiers the Devatrons had brought with them. Geoffrey was using his combat skills and crossbow, Espio had his shurikens, Charmy had his flying skills and stinger, Ruben had his martial arts skills (although he really misses his water powers and wishes he could use them), Wilson had his spinning blade, Mandy had her knuckle attachments, Amy had her Piko-Piko hammer, Cream had Cheese at her side, Cosmo was just useful in that Amy, she and Cream would be able to do their signature team move, Rouge had her screw-kicks and Sally and Nicole were holding out surprisingly well against the soldiers even though their battle skills weren't at the level of the more experienced fighters. The Devatron soldiers all had their arm cannons and their strength. They were all fighting each other and the battlefield was filled with flying punches, clashing weapons and firing cannons. The Royal Fighters were all putting up a great battle. But they couldn't seem to hit the Devatrons in the visor like they were hoping too. The Devatron soldiers were wising up to their battle tactics and making sure the Mobians couldn't hit their visors by blocking their attacks and ducking to avoid getting hit.

"Be careful out here everybody!" Sally called out to the others as she dodged a punch from a soldier "Even the soldiers give us sufficient reason to respect their battle prowess!"

"We get you Sally!" shouted Mandy as she punched a Devatron in the visor and cracked it, leaving it with unclear vision "These guys seem to get better the more we fight them! They're holding out well against our relentless onslaughts!"

"That's because we know their weaknesses and they're making sure we can't get their visors!" cried Nicole as she kicked a Devatron in the muzzle "That just means we've gotta try harder to hit them!"

The Devatron soldier just promptly backhanded Nicole and knocked

her down onto the ground. Sally tried to step in and held her lady-in-waiting but the Devatron soldier gave her an uppercut and sent her flying into Wilson just as he was trying to stab a Devatron in the visor. The dog and chipmunk fell onto the ground and the Devatron soldier Wilson was fighting prepared to blast them both. but Mandy stepped in for her husband and the Queen with a punch to the gut and then a punch to the face.

"Oh no you don't!" she yelled "Nobody's blasting my husband and the Queen of New Mobotropolis in my books!"

The Devatron just slugged Mandy and brought her down onto her knees. Wilson picked himself up and he threw his spinning blade at the Devatron before it could attack Mandy. The weapon hit the Devatron's hand and left a nasty gash on it. The hands were one of the weaker parts on a Devatron so it would be easier to damage them then any other body part. The Devatron soldier retaliated by shooting at Wilson and skimming him across the shoulder with the blast. Wilson grimaced in pain and he clutched his shoulder. The Devatron was about to blast him again but Ruben kicked the soldier away before it could shoot at him. Two Devatron soldiers sneaked up on Ruben and they fired at him but Ruben flipped out of their way and he hurled towards the soldiers. He split-kicked them and knocked them over onto their sides. He landed on his feet and he panted heavily.

"It'll be a miracle if we can push these guys back!" he puffed.

"It maybe so Ruben, but we've gotta try." said Sally "We can't let the Devatrons win and destroy Empire City. We've gotta keep this up."

Ruben nodded agreeably and he ran back into the battle. This battle was getting pretty intense and the winner didn't seem entirely obvious. Both sides were looking pretty evenly sided at the moment and the only thing that was going to guarantee victory for either side was whoever made the first mistake…

Back on *The Doombringer* , Devion had been experimenting on the blood sample he took from Shadow to see if he could work out what

DNA it contained. Try as he might though, he just couldn't work out whose DNA was in the sample. All he knew was Shadow had the blood of another species mixed with Chaos Energy and Mobian DNA. Devion decided he'd had enough of trying to work out who's DNA was in Shadow's blood and he turned back to the restrained hedgehog.

"It seems your creator is more mysterious then you know Shadow." said Devion "You blood contains the DNA of a species unknown to the Devatrons. Me equipment cannot decipher it."

"The only thing you've managed to find out is that I'm obviously not from Mobius." muttered Shadow "If my DNA is mostly that of another with Mobian DNA added then I must have been created by another species. But why have I been made in the image of the Mobians?"

"That is a question I will not waste my valuable time trying to find out for you." said Devion grimly "But what I am going to do is drain you dry of your energy."

He then pulled out a long pipe with a claw at the end of it from the equipment table.

"Your DNA contains the energy of the Chaos Emeralds and I refuse to allow you to have that kind of power." he crooned "Once I drain you, you will be a much weaker being and I will put your power to better use."

He then proceeded to advance on Shadow and prepared to attach the pipe to his head while Shadow could do nothing but lie there and wait for him to do so. He couldn't stop him so Devion was free to do what he liked and he was going to drain Shadow dry of his energy…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 57**

**** Bet you all remember that bit from *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 57 don't you?**

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 108**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 104**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 110**

Looks like Shadow's doomed to be powerless! How's he going to get out of this one? Metal Sonic maybe on his way to help him but will he reach him in time? And can the Royal Fighters push the Devatrons back again? Tune in for the third part of this arc next time!

Last Attempt at Victory 3

Arc 13: Last Attempt at Victory

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 111-113

Part 3: Extra Support

"Your DNA contains the energy of the Chaos Emeralds and I refuse to allow you to have that kind of power." Devion crooned "Once I drain you, you will be a much weaker being and I will put your power to better use."

He then proceeded to advance on the restrained Shadow the Hedgehog and prepared to attach the pipe to his head while Shadow could do nothing but lie there and wait for him to do so. He couldn't stop him so Devion was free to do what he liked and he was going to drain Shadow dry of his energy. Just imagine what chaos Devion could cause once he drained Shadow's power and used it for his own nefarious purposes. Devion attached the pipe to Shadow's head and he wandered over to the generator and prepared to pull the switch and activate the pipe's power-draining abilities. But just as Devion's claws closed around the switch, a laser fired from outside and blew a hole in the wall, startling Devion and Shadow. Then, shortly after the blast, something flew into the room and hovered just above the floor. It was Metal Sonic! He had arrived at last after being ordered to save Shadow by Katherine and by using his scanners on *The Doombringer* , he managed to find the room that Devion and Shadow were on. Metal Sonic touched down on the floor and he glared at Devion with his red optics. Devion just stood before Metal Sonic and bared his claws.

"What abomination of science is that?!" he snarled "It looks like a robot that's feebly trying to mirror Sonic's appearance."

"That's because it is." said Shadow "Dr. Eggman calls it "Metal Sonic" and I didn't think I'd ever be pleased to see it."

"Metal Sonic?" mused Devion "Shows how original this "Dr. Eggman" person is. Nevertheless, this cretin is interrupting my experiments so I'll be happy to deliver Metal Sonic back to his creator in pieces."

Metal Sonic bent down in a battle ready stance and he scanned Devion's data. This would help him put up a better fight against Devion since he'd know his battle skills and fighting moves and be able to counter attack them while also using his own attacks and battle skills. Devion removed his cape and he drew out his trademark golden sword. He ran up towards Metal Sonic with the sword raised above his head. Metal Sonic just stood there and waited for Devion to attack. Devion swung his sword at Metal Sonic but Metal Sonic lashed out and grabbed him by the wrists. He then proceeded to flip Devion over and throw him into the wall. Devion slammed into the wall upside down and he fell down onto the floor front first with a thud. Metal Sonic bent down in a battle ready stance and prepared to attack him again. Devion picked himself up and he turned around to face Metal Sonic. The glare in his visor was enough to make your heart stop.

"Looks like you're going to be more of a challenge then I expected." purred Devion "Especially as you are a robot that mimics Sonic to some degree. I suppose you even have the same moves as Sonic only different to some degree since you are a robot. Well let's see what tricks you have in your armour casing."

He picked up his sword and he prepared to attack again. Metal Sonic lunged at him with a spin-dash but Devion jumped up and kicked him away. Metal Sonic ended up hurling into a wall and almost cleaving straight through it. Metal Sonic recovered and he spin-dashed towards Devion again. Devion dodged the attack by jumping over him and Metal Sonic uncurled from his spin-dash so he could skid to a halt. Devion threw his sword at Metal Sonic like a boomerang but Metal Sonic blasted it to bits with his torso laser. Devion's trademark weapon was no more. Just slithers of gold littering the floor. Devion was livid with rage at this and he clenched his fists.

"So you relieve me of my weapon." he said "That will not hinder me in anyway. I will still destroy you Metal Sonic."

Metal Sonic rocketed towards Devion but Devion held his hands out and the two ended up linking hands with one another. Metal Sonic pushed Devion backwards by using his rockets but Devion wasn't going to give in so easily. He tightened his grip on Metal Sonic and tried his hardest to stop Metal Sonic from pushing him. But Metal Sonic's rockets were always going to overpower anyone he was having a pushing match with so Devion couldn't keep himself from being pushed. He could however stop Metal Sonic. Devion, using all his might, threw Metal Sonic over into the wall. Metal Sonic spiralled through the air crazily and he hit the wall with a mighty clunk. Metal Sonic shook himself off and he rocketed towards Devion again. Devion clasped his fists together and he swung them upwards, walloping Metal Sonic in the chin and knocking him down onto his back. Before Metal Sonic could even get up, Devion pounced on him and plunged his claws into Metal Sonic's torso. He tore a chunk of metal off of his torso and then threw him into another wall. The chunk that had been torn off wasn't vital to Metal Sonic at all, only superficial damage so he was alright. Metal Sonic stood back up and waited for Devion to charge to him. Devion ran towards Metal Sonic with his hands held out, ready to snatch him up and rip him to pieces. Metal Sonic blasted Devion with his torso-laser and sent him flying backwards. Devion landed on his back and skidded to a halt. Metal Sonic rocketed towards Devion and just as Devion stood back up, Metal Sonic swung his legs forward and flew into him feet first. Devion was thrown backwards again and he landed with a clunk on the floor, bounced up, flipped over onto his front and landed with a heavy clang at the foot of the wall at the end of the lab. Metal Sonic decided to add insult to injury by grabbing some tools of torture from the nearby desktop and then throwing them at Devion. Devion merely ducked to avoid getting hit by them and the torture weapons all hit the wall and fell to the floor with a chorus of clangs. Devion charged back into the battle but Metal Sonic spin-dashed him in the gut and to make it more painful, Metal Sonic made his spin-dash go upwards so he ended up carrying Devion off the floor and spin-dashing him directly into the ceiling. Devion ended up falling down from the ceiling after that slam and he hit the floor with a heavy thunk. Had his armour not been so strong then he would have broken something. Shadow sneered at him as Metal Sonic then pile-dived him from behind before he could get back up.

"Not so tough when you're against someone who can match you blow for blow are you?" he jeered.

Devion growled furiously at Shadow and he back-handed Metal Sonic away before he could attack him again.

"You can silence that mouth of yours Shadow!" snapped Devion "You and even Sonic the Hedgehog both have sufficient reason to respect my battle prowess! Fighting Metal Sonic is merely just fighting another one of you only he is more solidly built and possibly more powerful because he is a robot! I'll refute him just as easily as I've refuted you & Sonic!"

"We'll see about that Devion." said Shadow with a sarcastic smile on his face.

Devion just ignored him and he turned around to face Metal Sonic again. Metal Sonic bent down in a stance that suggested he was ready to pounce on him again. Devion & Metal Sonic stared each other down and then they charged at each other and punched each other directly in the face…

Meanwhile, over in Empire City, the Royal Fighters and the Devatrons were still at it and the battle was just continuing to get more and more intense as it went on. Truly a massive showdown for the fate of Empire City. It was the only place of sanctuary that the Royal Fighters could possibly have after the capture of New Mobotropolis and the destruction of Knothole* and they couldn't afford to lose it so they had to win this fight. The Devatrons were here to destroy Empire City and prevent the Royal Fighters from rescuing Shadow, although they botched that one up in that Metal Sonic got away and Triton failed to stop him, and they were determined to win this match since failing Devion was not an option. Devion detested failure and they did not want to bear the brunt of his punishments so they were not going to let the Royal Fighters win this one.

Knuckles the Echidna and his somewhat girlfriend Shade the Echidna were both fighting Raicor, the former second-in-command

who had been reformed and demoted into fifth-in-command after attempting to overthrow Devion**. Raicor was second only to Devion strength wise so he was no easy opponent and he had been holding out well in this battle despite being up against two powerful fighters. Most of the reason he was winning was because he kept blocking the echidna's attacks with his wings, stopping them from hurting him, and then he attacked them back. Shade Blade-Rushed Raicor but Raicor blocked the attack with his wings yet again and he backhanded Shade onto her front. He then lunged at Shade with his staff but he missed her just by an inch and he ended up getting the horns on Shade's helmet hooked on his staff. Raicor decided to use this moment to lift the staff up and throw Shade over onto her back. That slam was enough to wind anybody and Shade gasped in surprise as her body hit the ground. Raicor then tried to stab Shade but Shade shifted out of the way of the centre prong just as the staff lunged towards her. But Raicor was a fraction too quick and he ended up pinning Shade to the ground with the centre and right prongs of his staff. The prongs were around her neck and they were embedded into the ground so she couldn't move. Shade gripped the staff and she tried to pull it out of the ground but Raicor was keeping the staff embedded around her neck and he was much too strong for Shade. Raicor pushed down on the staff, hoping to suffocate Shade. It seemed to be working too because Shade found herself gasping for breath and her strength was beginning to give way. Raicor began to cackle delightedly. Knuckles saw what was happening and he ran forward to stop Raicor from killing Shade. He drew his arms back and he prepared to punch Raicor but Raicor saw him coming. Raicor left the staff to keep Shade pinned to the ground and he charged towards Knuckles. Knuckles lunged at Raicor but Raicor shielded himself with his wings and Knuckles punched them. Punching the wings didn't hurt Knuckles but he grumbled in annoyance. He was so sick of Raicor doing this now. He began to punch even more furiously but Raicor kept himself shielded. Raicor then deployed his arm cannons, unshielded himself, and blasted Knuckles with them. Knuckles was thrown across the battlefield and he landed sharply on his back. That attack left Knuckles stunned and weakened. He couldn't pick himself up. The pain in his back was too much for him. Raicor cackled again and he advanced on Knuckles. Shade could see what was happening and she desperately tried to free herself from the embedded staff but she couldn't. It was embedded too

deeply and she wasn't strong enough. She was stuck to the ground with the centre and right prongs of Raicor's staff around her neck. As for Raicor, he walked up to Knuckles and he stood over the red echidna. Knuckles tired to move but the pain he was in was too great. Raicor picked Knuckles up by his head and he held him out at arm's length.

"Your hide belongs to me Mobian!" growled Raicor.

He then drew his other arm back and prepared to plunge his claws into Knuckles' chest. Knuckles just closed his eyes and awaited his doom. But just as Raicor prepared to kill him, Espio the Chameleon abandoned the Devatron soldier he was facing and he ran towards Raicor at top speed. He threw several shuriken at him and they all ricocheted harmlessly off Raicor's arm. Raicor turned around and wondered where all the shurikens were coming from and Espio leaped up into the air and pile-dived Raicor in the face. Raicor was thrown down onto the ground and he dropped Knuckles. Espio smirked at Raicor and then he ran over to the pinned down Shade. He grabbed Raicor's staff and with a mighty tug, he pulled it out of the ground, freeing Shade and allowing her to get back up. Shade coughed heavily and Espio helped her stand back up.

"Hurk! Thank you Espio." said Shade.

"Tis an honour to come to the aid of a woman as pretty as you." said Espio politely.

If Shade wasn't wearing her helmet, you could probably see her blushing right now. Knuckles picked himself up and he ran over to Shade & Espio.

"Shade, are you OK?" asked Knuckles.

"I'm fine." said Shade "We're both lucky Espio decided to come and help us."

"We are." agreed Knuckles "Say Espio, care to help us kick Raicor's butt?"

"I'd be happy to." said Espio "Although me helping you two means

that the others have more Devatron soldiers to deal with."

"They look like they can handle them." said Knuckles, looking over at Amy, Cream, Cosmo, Charmy, Wilson, Mandy, Geoffrey, Ruben, Sally & Nicole who were all fighting the twenty Devatron soldiers that the four sub-leaders had brought with them. They seemed to have the fight under control so far so Espio could switch opponents and help fight Raicor.

"OK then." said Espio "I'll help you fight Raicor."

"Thanks Espio." said Knuckles, cracking his knuckles (har, har) and flexing his muscles.

Raicor picked himself up and he raised his wings menacingly. Shade quickly picked up Raicor's staff and pointed it at him. Raicor didn't seem to care though and he just stared at his three opponents.

"I will tear off all your heads Mobians!" growled Raicor "I bet Devion would approve of me having such trophies!"

"You're not getting anybody's heads Raicor!" yelled Knuckles.

Shade charged forward and she held Raicor's staff out so she could skewer him like a kebab. Raicor just stood there and waited for Shade to get him. Just as the staff was about to stab him in the gut, Raicor slammed his hands around it and stopped it just inches in front of him. Raicor then wrapped his claws around the staff and got a proper grip on it. Shade tried to yank it out of his grasp but Raicor's grasp was much too tough. Knuckles & Espio charged towards Raicor but Raicor swung the staff around with Shade still holding onto it and he walloped them both with Shade's body. Knuckles & Espio were thrown backwards and they grimaced in pain. Shade was still holding onto the staff and she tried to yank it out of Raicor's grip again. Raicor just hoisted Shade off the ground by raising the staff above his head. He then swung the staff down onto the ground and slammed Shade against it. It was almost like she was being swatted like a fly. That slam caused Shade to finally let go of Raicor's staff and Raicor twirled it around. Knuckles & Espio picked themselves back up and they both pounced on Raicor.

They landed on Raicor but he pushed them back with his staff. He tired to skewer Espio with the staff but Espio drew out a kunai and he threw it at Raicor's visor. Raicor shifted his head slightly so the kunai ended up skimming the top of his head. Espio then leaped up onto his feet and he began to unleash a round of ninjutsu moves on Raicor, forcing him backwards and preventing him from fighting back since Espio was moving too fast and attacking repeatedly so Raicor couldn't regain himself and launch an attack himself. Espio then back flipped and as he flipped over, his legs smacked Raicor in the face and made him stagger. Knuckles then added insult to injury by jumping up behind Raicor and punching him hard enough to knock him down onto his front. Shade then joined in by picking up her blades and Blade-Rushing Raicor across the face. That move was going to make Raicor mad since Shade had taken one of his horns already and he didn't want to lose another. Raicor raised his wings and he put his staff away. Knuckles, Shade & Espio prepared to attack again but Raicor grabbed Knuckles & Shade and flew up into the air. He flew up a good height and then he threw the two echidnas down to the ground. Knuckles & Shade both hurtled towards the ground like falling stars. Espio didn't know what to do. He wouldn't be able to save both of them from crashing down to the ground for they were too far apart. Luckily, he didn't need to for Knuckles & Shade both managed to flip themselves over and they landed on their feet. The impact made them fall down onto their knees as pain flooded up their legs but they were soon back up on their feet. Raicor however swooped down to the ground and he knocked them both over as he flew past them. The echidnas both grimaced in pain and Raicor swerved around so he could fly into them and attack them again. Espio leaped in and he threw a shuriken at Raicor's head but the shuriken pinged off of it harmlessly. The shuriken didn't even scratch Raicor's head. Raicor flew towards Espio and he seized him. He flew up into the air and he threw him directly towards a nearby building. Espio hurled through the air and crashed straight through a window. Raicor cackled dementedly and he decided to add insult to injury by flying around the foot of the building and shooting it like mad. He fired his arm cannons all around the bottom part of the building Espio had been sent crashing into and he began to weaken the structure of it. Knuckles & Shade picked themselves up just in time to see Raicor switch his arm cannons from laser mode to cannon mode and he

fired a pair of cannonballs at the building. The building was weak from all the damage Raicor had done to it and it began to tilt forward. Espio stuck his head out of the window only to realize that the building was beginning to fall over. Espio just leaped out of the window, somersaulted through the air and he landed on the ground in proper ninja fashion. But the danger wasn't over yet. The building was beginning to fall down to the ground thanks to Raicor weakening the structure near the base of the building. Knuckles, Shade & Espio all ran for their lives as the building finally fell down and crashed onto the ground. The resulting fall caused the building to crumble into a pile of steel debris and the ground cracked heavily. The Mobians stared at the fallen building. They were horrified that Raicor had done this and they began to think on how many people could have been INSIDE the building and that they were probably all dead now.

"Those Devatrons are monsters!" cried Espio "They just shot a building down in hopes of killing us! I dread to think if there was anyone in there!"

"We'll search the wreckage for bodies later Espio." said Knuckles "We've gotta stop those creeps before they do anymore damage to the city!"

Raicor then suddenly swooped down and knocked the three down with one hefty charge. He then landed on the ground and clipped his wings back together.

"Impressive." complimented Raicor "Few people have managed to escape a falling building and survive. This just gives me more of a reason to kill you all."

"Just try it!" yelled Shade, lunging towards Raicor with Knuckles & Espio following her. Raicor just braced himself and prepared to let them have it.

Over to the other fighters and the Devatrons they were fighting, they weren't really doing much better then Knuckles, Shade & Espio were. Steelor was too powerful and too skilled for poor Marik the Martian to gain any edge on, Triton's strength was too much for Vector and Katherine, Tronic and Bunnie were evenly matched so

far and the Devatron soldiers were beginning to overwhelm the others given how well the Devatrons were holding out against them and they were doing well at dodging their attacks so the Royal Fighters couldn't hit them in the visor. Marik kept trying to zap Steelor in the visor but Steelor was too swift for Marik to hit. Marik kept missing and Steelor bombarded him with powerful punches that could have broken through a brick wall. Marik uppercut Steelor in the chin but Steelor uppercut Marik back and Marik clutched his throbbing jaw. He felt like his teeth were going to fall out after that attack. Steelor then deployed his saw blade and chipped Marik's helmet with it. Marik retaliated by clawing him across the upper left arm. The attack left nothing but mere scratches on it. Steelor's response was to kick Marik in the gut as hard as he could. Marik doubled over in pain and he spluttered in pain. He was so winded he could hardly speak. Steelor laughed at him and he picked the downed Martian up by his jacket. He then decided to throw Marik across the battlefield and send him crashing into Amy who was just hammering a Devatron soldier away. The two ended up sprawling on the ground and Amy grumbled at Marik.

"Marik! Will you get off me?!" she yelled, shoving Marik away "And don't knock me over when I'm fighting for my life here!"

"Spare me the dramatics Amy!" snarled Marik "I was thrown into you by one of the Devatron sub-leaders!"

"Will you'd better put up a better fight or we're mince meat out here Marik!" snapped Amy rudely.

"Watch your tone Amy or I'll change my mind and kill you instead of the Devatrons!" retorted Marik.

Amy just huffed and got back to fighting the Devatron soldier she was hammering while Marik went back to fighting Steelor. Amy swung her Piko-Piko hammer at the Devatron soldier but the soldier drew out a long sharp blade from its forearm (some Devatrons have blades, others don't) and it sliced Amy's hammer in two. Amy shrieked in horror and she instantly began to back away. The Devatron began swinging it's blade at Amy but Amy managed to dodge the attacking Devatron just narrowly. Amy summoned another hammer to her hand and she walloped the Devatron's arm

with it just as it tried to cleave her in two with its blade. Cream and Cosmo came in and Amy decided now was the time to use her team's signature move. Cream carried Cosmo up into the air with the aid of her ears and Cosmo held on to Amy. Cream then began to swing Cosmo and Amy around and Amy held her hammer out. Cream flew closer towards the Devatron soldier but some other soldiers came in and shot the girls down before they could hit the blade-arm Devatron. Amy, Cream and Cosmo all fell down to the ground in a heap and they groaned in pain. Three Devatron soldiers all closed in on the girls and the blade-arm soldier pointed its blade at Amy's face. The Devatron was about to stab Amy in the face (ouch!) but it was stopped by Ruben and Charmy jumping in and double-teaming it in the torso. The Devatron was thrown down onto its back. The three soldiers began shooting at Ruben and Charmy but their shots missed them and Ruben delivered a ninja style kick to the face that cracked one soldier's visor and threw it backwards a few feet. The other two soldiers attempted to shoot Ruben but Ruben leaped out of the way of them, causing the soldiers to accidentally shoot each other and they were both brought down onto their knees. Ruben couldn't help but smirk at them and he helped Amy stand back up while Charmy helped up Cream and Cosmo.

"Thanks Ruben and Charmy." said Amy.

"No problem Amy." said Ruben brightly "Unfortunately, I don't think we'll be able to keep this up for much longer."

"The Devatrons are getting better at their fights." said Cosmo "It's getting harder to hit them in their weak spot and the sub-leaders are just too powerful. It's like the Devatrons are very adaptable and they quickly adapt to our fighting tactics so avoid getting destroyed."

"I was getting that feeling too." murmured Ruben "If that is the case then we'll never destroy them."

"And that's really gonna suck!" whined Charmy "We can't let those Devatrons win!"

"I know we can't but If we prolong this battle, we're gonna be history." said Ruben "We need some extra support."

"How about the other teams like Team Adabat, Team Grand Metropolis, Team Megapolis and the Northern Royal Fighters?" suggested Amy "They're here in Empire City as well as us. They'll be able to help us."

"That's a good idea Amy." said Cream "But we need to find them and call them so they can help us."

"If luck's on our side, they'll come to our aid anyway." thought Ruben "They'll easily notice this big battle that's going on since they're here in Empire City like we are."

As they were talking, the bladed Devatron soldier sneaked up on them and it raised its arm, preparing to slice off all their heads in one fell swoop. It was being ever so quiet too so the girls, Ruben & Charmy didn't even hear it and by the time they did, their heads would be rolling across the ground and their headless bodies just lying on the ground, blood pouring out of their necks. But the Devatron wouldn't even get a chance to do so for a big purple plasma cannon blast came out of nowhere and hit the Devatron, sending it flying backwards where it landed on it's back and was left lying there, faint smoke drifting up from it due to how powerful the blast was. That sudden attack surprised everybody and Ruben, Charmy and the girls looked around to see who fired that shot. It was Miranda Mongoose, leader of the Northern Royal Fighters. She was armed with the heavy duty plasma cannon that she had once used to kill Metal Sonic for good***. She and her team weren't the only ones here to help. Team Adabat was here too and so were Kiara the Cheetah from Megapolis and Bostock and Mortimer from Grand Metropolis. They had all seen this fight going on just outside of Empire City and they had decided to come and help since it looked like they were in trouble. The Royal Fighters numbers had just boosted to twenty-nine now (there would have been thirty if Metal Sonic was still here). Miranda reloaded her weapon and she prepared to fire again.

"That was for what your second-in-command did to Kate." she said coldly.

"Awesome! Our friends have come to help us!" cried Charmy excitedly.

"Of all the fortunate things to happen!" said Ruben happily "We've gotten some much needed back up!"

"You got that right Mobotropolis Royal Fighters!" declared Kiara "We saw all the commotion going on and we decided to lend a hand!"

"Good thing you decided to come because we're getting overwhelmed here!" cried Amy brightly.

"Now we're here, we can even the odds." said Scott Lynx, summoning energy to his hands and preparing to throw it at the Devatrons.

The Devatron soldier with the arm blade picked itself back up and it charged towards the new arrivals. The Royal Fighters teams all readied themselves and they began to attack the Devatron soldiers along with the Mobotropolis Royal Fighters. Tronic, who had managed to push Bunnie back long enough for him to see the battle's current status, had seen all this happen and he decided if the Royal Fighters were going to boost their numbers then so could he. His team may only be outnumbered by five now but in battle, even the slightest increase in enemy soldiers could potentially tip the scales of war in the enemy's favour. Not to mention, the Devatrons didn't like to play fair so Tronic decided to increase his squadron just so the Mobians would get sorely defeated. Tronic touched the side of his head and he spoke to the Devatron crew on *The Doombringer* .

"Attention Devatrons. We are in need of extra support." droned Tronic "Send me twenty more soldiers immediately."

"Yes Tronic." said a Devatron soldier.

In a few minutes, the Devatron soldiers would end up increasing to forty-four and the Royal Fighters would REALLY end up being out numbered now. Empire City was doomed for sure once the back up arrived. The Royal Fighters would be overwhelmed by the Devatron's numbers and Empire City would crumble before them, leaving the Royal Fighters without a base of sanctuary once again…

Back on *The Doombringer* , the fight with Devion & Metal Sonic was going evenly for both sides. Devion was taking the pain thrown at him by Metal Sonic and Metal Sonic was either too fast for Devion to hit or too resilient for him to flat out destroy. Metal Sonic was actually showing signs of wear and tear on his armour but it was nothing to be considered about, mostly superficial damage at most. Especially the chunk that had been taken out of his chest earlier. Shadow had been watching the whole battle and he had no idea who was going to win this fight. It looked like the fight was going to go either way. Metal Sonic charged towards Devion again in a mighty spin-dash but Devion caught him in his hands and threw him directly into a wall. Metal Sonic was about to pull himself free from the wall but Devion pinned him against the wall and began to slam him against it as ferociously as he could. He was hoping to smash Metal Sonic to pieces by doing it this way. Devion slammed Metal Sonic three times against the wall and ended up buckling the tips of his quills in the process but before Devion could slam Metal Sonic again, the robot Sonic clone blasted Devion in the torso with his torso laser and made him drop him. Devion lunged at Metal Sonic just after dropping him but Metal Sonic roundhouse kicked him in the legs and brought Devion crashing down to the floor. Metal Sonic then grabbed Devion by his head and threw him up into the air. Devion spiralled up into the air and just as he was coming crashing down to the floor, Metal Sonic spin-dashed him and sent him hurling across the room. He came to a stop just in front of Shadow's restraint bed and Shadow sneered at him. Devion picked himself up and he deployed his arm cannon. He was about to shoot Metal Sonic with it when suddenly, he had an even better idea. He pointed the cannon at Shadow instead, the black hedgehog staring at it in shock and scowling at Devion for taking the cowardly approach. Metal Sonic ran towards Devion but he screeched to a halt and stared at Devion, wondering what he was up to and what he was going to do. Devion narrowed his visor down to an evil slit and he kept the cannon pointed at Shadow's face.

"Stand down Metal Sonic or Shadow the Hedgehog will end up without his head." threatened Devion "And don't think I am bluffing either. If you so much as take one step forward, I will fire. This will be your only warning."

"Metal Sonic, don't listen to him!" cried Shadow "Kill him already! Go on! Kill him! If you stand down then you can't get me outta this and I can't help defeat the Devatrons!"

"You would be wise to remain silent in these tense moments Shadow the Hedgehog." muttered Devion "Now Metal Sonic. Will you stand down or allow Shadow to become victim of the Devatrons?"

Metal Sonic just stood there and stared at Devion. He had no idea what to do. He knew he had to save Shadow since Shadow could help defeat the Devatrons but he couldn't risk trying to save him and letting Devion shoot him in the head. There was no way Metal Sonic would be able to stop Devion before he pulled the trigger. He was too close and his reaction time would be too quick even for him. Metal Sonic could however goad Devion into thinking he was standing down and then go to town on him. That idea could work and it was worth a shot so Metal Sonic decided to try it. Metal Sonic stood up straight and put his arms down to his sides. He looked down at the floor and didn't make any gestures or moves. Devion took this as a sign of surrender and he retracted his arm cannon. Shadow scowled at Metal Sonic crossly.

"Metal Sonic! Don't give in you stupid hunk of metal! Destroy him!" barked Shadow.

"Metal Sonic has made his decision and he's chosen to surrender." snapped Devion "He does not need you to tell him other wise."

Devion then marched up to Metal Sonic and he put a hand on the robot clone's shoulder. Metal Sonic remained looking down at the floor and he refused to look at Devion.

"You are an impressive construct Metal Sonic." said Devion "You mimic Sonic almost flawlessly, you lack his irksome personality which infinitely makes you better then him and you're quite resilient. I do not wish to have the dishonour of tearing apart such a wonderful piece of machinery so I shall take you for my own and incase you in Devatron chrome. You will make a fine addition to my army."

Metal Sonic still didn't do anything and remained facing the floor.

Devion was a little annoyed at the fact Metal Sonic wasn't paying attention to him but he didn't let it bother him.

"Come with me Metal Sonic and I shall redesign you into the Devatron image and put you to much better use." he ordered "A machine as magnanimous as you should not go to waste."

Metal Sonic did as he was told and he followed Devion out of the science room. Devion was going to take Metal Sonic to the production chamber where he would incase him in Devatron chrome and make him an obedient servant to him and his army. But Metal Sonic wouldn't have to go through that for he hadn't actually surrendered. He had tricked Devion so Shadow's life wouldn't be threatened and he could attack him without putting Shadow at risk. Metal Sonic then suddenly pounced on Devion and punched the Devatron soldier in the visor, cracking it heavily and leaving Devion's vision unclear. Devion cried out in surprise and Metal Sonic tripped him up. He blasted a hole in the wall with his torso laser and he picked Devion up. He raised Devion above his head and he threw Devion through the hole in the wall he'd made. Devion was sent hurling from *The Doombringer* and crashing down to the ground outside, much to the surprise of the construction crew who were still working on *The Doombringer* . Now Devion was finally out of the way, Metal Sonic decided it would be a good time to free Shadow. He ran over to Shadow and he grabbed the cuffs around his wrists. He pulled on them and literally yanked them out of their sockets. He did the same to the cuffs around Shadow's ankles. Shadow was now completely free at last and he began to rub his wrists better.

"Thank you Metal Sonic." said Shadow "But don't think I'm gonna soften up to the doctor because of this. We're still enemies."

Metal Sonic nodded understandably. He knew that Shadow would never trust Dr. Eggman after what lies he'd told him.

"Now I'm free, take me outside so that I may find my inhibitor rings." said Shadow "I'll need them to power up again and then I'll be able to help you all fight the Devatrons."

Metal Sonic obeyed and he picked Shadow up. He flew through the hole in the wall and out into the open. Shadow never realized how

good it felt to be out in the open before and now he was feeling the sunlight on his fur, it occurred to him he preferred it much more in the outside world. Metal Sonic began scanning the grassy ground below for any signs of Shadow's inhibitor rings. He looked around and kept a beady eye alert for them. Shadow kept a close look out too since he actually knew what the rings looked like and he'd be more likely to spot them. After a minute of flying around, Shadow saw something twinkle on the ground. It was his inhibitor rings, shining in the sunlight. They were lying a few feet away from the crater that Shadow had made earlier after Devion messed up his Chaos Blast.

"There they are Metal Sonic!" ordered Shadow "Fly me down!"

Metal Sonic obeyed and he flew down to the ground with Shadow in tow. They both landed on the ground and Shadow bent down to pick up the inhibitor rings. He grabbed them and he quickly clipped them back onto his wrists. But just as he did that, a cannonball shaped blast shot out from nowhere and struck Metal Sonic in the back, utterly destroying him in the process and reducing him to a smouldering wreck of robot parts and smoke. Shadow was alarmed by this and he saw none other then Devion running towards him with his arm cannon deployed. He stopped just in front of Shadow and he pointed his cannon at him.

"I could have saved myself a lot of trouble if I just set my arm cannon to cannon mode in the first place." muttered Devion "Now Shadow. Remove your inhibitor rings and come back to me quietly and calmly or I will let your bear the brunt of my cannon blasts."

"You will not be going anything of the sort Devion." sneered Shadow "For now I'm recharged, I can do this again."

With that said, Shadow just warped away into thin air and reappeared about fifty feet away from Devion (his teleporting has limited range). Shadow then proceeded to run for his life and head all the way back to Empire City. Devion began shooting cannonballs at Shadow as madly as he could but Shadow was too far away for him to hit. Shadow was gone in a matter of seconds and Devion would never be able to catch him. This resulted in Devion retracting his arm cannon and throwing his arms up in anguish, roaring loudly

at the top of his voice and the roar echoing ominously through the sky. Devion lowered his arms and he growled to himself.

"It appears I shall have to just go full force on the Mobians if I am to win this battle." he deduced "No more taking prisoners, no more prolonging their existence, they're to be all wiped out…"

With that said he stormed back to *The Doombringer* , hoping that his forces in Empire City were doing better then he was right now…

And in a way, they were. Tronic's back up had arrived and the Devatron numbers had been boosted up to forty. Forty Devatrons were now facing twenty-nine Mobians all at once. The battlefield was now full of firing Devatrons and attacking Mobians. The extra support for the Mobians was providing them a good edge for Miranda had a very powerful weapon on her side, the chipmunk brothers Thunder & Bolt had their electrical attacks and Scott and Jessica had their energy powers to fight the Devatrons off and Kiara's speed could double for Sonic & Shadow even though she wasn't as fast as they were. Miranda pointed her plasma cannon at a Devatron soldier and she fired at its head. The shot hit it in the visor and destroyed the Devatron's head in an instant. The Devatron collapsed dead onto the ground, smoke pouring from its neck.

"Good shot Miranda!" cried Kari the Rat.

"Thank you Kari." said Miranda "Now where's the Devatron who killed Kate so that I may make him pay for his deed?"

"Right here Mobian heathens!" roared Raicor who abandoned his fight with Knuckles, Shade & Espio and charged over to Miranda.

Miranda jumped in surprise and she fired the cannon at Raicor. Raicor raised his wings and he flew out of the way of the blasts with ease. He then tackled Miranda and made her drop the cannon. Kari ran over to grab it but Raicor shot it and destroyed it in an instant with his cannon arm. Kari squealed and she stood back. Raicor grabbed Miranda by the neck and she hoisted her up to his height. Miranda struggled in the Devatron fifth-in-command's grasp.

"Hurk! Let me go!" grunted Miranda.

"I remember you woman." sneered Raicor "I killed your feathered friend didn't I? Well allow me to give you the honour of reuniting with her!"

"No! Oh god! Please no!" begged Miranda "Let go of me! Don't kill me! No!"

Raicor began to tighten his grip on her neck. He was slowly but surely throttling the poor mongoose to death. Kari panicked and she began to pathetically kick Raicor in the legs to distract him.

"Put Miranda down!" she ordered "Leave her alone you ugly monstrous robot!"

Raicor kicked Kari away and continued to throttle Miranda. But just as Miranda's life was beginning to seep away, Thunder & Bolt both threw a pair of lightening bolts at him. The bolts hit Raicor near his visor and they made Raicor flinch and throw Miranda away. Miranda landed rather sharply on the ground and she grimaced in pain. Thunder & Bolt began to bombard Raicor with lightening bolts but Raicor shielded himself with his wings to block their attacks. Knuckles, Shade & Espio ran in to aid the Northern Royal Fighters but some Devatron soldiers stepped in to even the odds. The echidnas and Espio resumed their match with Raicor and the Northern Royal Fighters dealt with the foot soldiers. Miranda was stuck using her fighting skills since her best weapon had just been destroyed. The Mobians and Devatrons all began to battle each other, all of them desperate to kill the other.

As for Triton, he was still fighting Vector and Katherine but they were now being aided by the Adabat Royal Fighters and Triton had gotten some extra support himself. The foot soldiers all began to attack Vector and Katherine, prompting the crocodile and Eggman servant bot to start pushing them back while the Adabat Royal Fighters prepared to face off with Triton. Triton readied his saw stick and he bent down in a battle ready stance.

"I remember you four." he purred "You tried to stop us from stealing lava from that volcano we raided the other day. Well you'll be mad to

hear that we've recycled it into fuel for our ship so you'll never get it back."

"I knew you couldn't possibly need that lava for any good." muttered Jessica "I didn't think fuel supplies was what you were stealing the lava for though."

"It doesn't matter now." said Scott "Because the Devatrons won't get to put that lava to good use. Let's smash them all team!"

"Verily Scott!" declared Felix the Peacock, drawing out a pair of feathers and stiffening them into clubs.

"You Mobians don't half bore me with your repetitive hero banter." muttered Triton "I'll be much happier once I slice you all open and then I don't have to hear you all speak again."

This just prompted the team to charge at Triton and began throwing their attacks at him. Scott and Jessica bombarded him with energy spears, Felix began to club him with his clubs and Taran, since he didn't have his weapon anymore, just resorted to using his brute strength. Triton took all the blows and he swiped his saw stick at the four Mobians to force them back and give himself some space. Felix flew over Triton and just as he passed over his head, he clubbed him in the back of his head. Triton's response was to swipe his saw-stick at Felix and he ended up giving a few of his tail feathers a trim. Felix squawked in surprise and he looked over at his tail-feathers, which were now noticeably shorter. This enraged the peacock and he began clubbing Triton all over his face as madly as he could. Triton just slugged Felix in the gut and then elbow slammed him down into the ground. Taran grabbed one of Triton's arms and he tried to force it behind his back but Triton was too strong for Taran and Taran ended up finding himself thrown across the battlefield. Scott and Jessica both threw a bunch of energy spears at Triton but Triton took the blows and he swiped his saw-stick at them. He got them both across the stomach and the two energy-powered Adabat residents were brought down on their knees, grimacing in pain. Triton cackled at the two and he activated his saw stick. The saw blade squealed as it was activated and Triton neared it towards their heads. But just as the saw blade was within inches of their faces, Vector grabbed a Devatron soldier and threw it at Triton. The

Devatron hit Triton and the two were sent tumbling over. Scott and Jessica sighed with relief and they stood back up, still clutching their stomachs which now had a long stinging cut across them.

"Thanks Vector." said Scott.

"Don't mention it kid." said Vector brightly "Just bustin' some Devatron heads that's all."

Triton threw the soldier off of himself and he got back up to his feet. He was proper angry and he was about ready to kill. He activated his saw-stick and he prepared to throw it.

"I'll have you all sliced to pieces at the end of this day!" he bellowed.

And with that, he swiped the air with the saw-stick and the saw-blade hurtled towards Vector. Vector dodged the saw blade and it boomeranged back to Triton, who caught it with the stick. Vector charged towards Triton and Triton charged towards him.

As this whole fight was going on, Shadow the Hedgehog finally arrived on the scene and he saw what was going on. The Royal Fighters and the Devatrons were all in a titanic battle together just outside of Empire City. Shadow didn't take long to figure out why all this was happening and he skated towards the battle. Sally & Nicole were both dealing with a Devatron soldier each and their efforts weren't doing much good so far. Sally then saw Shadow coming and while she was surprised to see him suddenly appear, she beamed happily.

"Nicole! Shadow's coming!" exclaimed Sally "He must have escaped from Devion!"

"Great!" cried Nicole, dodging a Devatron's attack "Now he can help us defeat the Devatrons!"

Shadow jumped into the air and he spin-dashed towards the Devatrons that were fighting Sally & Nicole. He knocked them all over and sent them flying backwards. After that amazing attack, he landed on the ground just in front of Sally & Nicole.

"Hello your highness." said Shadow.

"Shadow, you've made it at last!" said Sally brightly "How did you escape The Doombringer?"

"Metal Sonic freed me but Devion destroyed him before we could head back." explained Shadow "No matter since the doctor will just built a new one. Now, tell everybody to clear the area. I'm going to Chaos Blast all the Devatrons."

"OK Shadow. Let's hope this works." said Sally.

Sally & Nicole carried out Shadow's order and they called to all the Royal Fighters.

"Everybody! Fall back! Fall back!" ordered Sally "Don't ask questions! Just fall back!"

The Royal Fighters were a little confused by this order but they obeyed it anyway. It was quite clear that Sally had some kind of plan, especially as Shadow had returned and was standing there next to her. The Royal Fighters abandoned their fight and they retreated back into the city, leaving only Shadow the Hedgehog standing there and ready to Chaos Blast them all. The Devatrons began to wonder why the Mobians had suddenly retreated and left only Shadow to fight them. They didn't care though. They had been ordered to destroy Empire City and kill the Royal Fighters so they were going to do it anyway. Shadow was the only one staying around to fight but one little Mobian was not going to stop thirty-nine Devatrons by himself, even if he is powerful and is the Ultimate Life form. The Devatrons all advanced on Shadow and they readied their weapons.

"Devatrons. Attack on my command." droned Tronic "We shall destroy this black hedgehog."

"I thought Devion captured him. How did he manage to escape?" asked Triton.

"It does not matter since he's come to die with the Royal Fighters." crowed Raicor "Let's eviscerate him!"

"I have not come back here to die with the Royal Fighters." said

Shadow, unclipping his inhibitor rings once again "I came here to win with the Royal Fighters."

His rings fell to the ground with a clatter and his body began to glow a bright crimson red. Raicor immediately freaked and he backed away.

"Devatrons! Get back! He's going to use his most powerful attack!" shrieked Raicor, running away as fast as he possibly could.

He remembered Shadow's Chaos Blast from earlier and he did not want to get caught up in it. As soon as Raicor was a good distance away, he took to the skies with a mighty swoop of his wings. Tronic, Triton & Steelor could see that Raicor had the right to be afraid and they ran for their lives too. The thirty-nine Devatron soldiers didn't run away though. They decided to see if they could stop Shadow. They began to shoot at him but Shadow's body was protected by the Chaos Energy building up and forming around his body. He then unleashed the energy inside of him and bellowed.

"Chaos… **BLAAAAAAASSSSSSSTTTTT!** "

And he unleashed the energy within. The Chaos Blast erupted from within and it blew all the Devatron soldiers away like a giant gust of wind. The power of the blast shattered their visors and the force of the attack damaged the insides of their heads, killing them all in an instant. The dead Devatrons all landed a few feet away in a heap and their dead bodies began smoking from the power of that Chaos Blast. Shadow fell down onto his knees and panted after releasing that Chaos Blast. He picked up his inhibitor rings and he clipped them back onto his wrists. Shadow smirked triumphantly to himself. He was pleased to see all the damage he'd just done to the Devatrons and that he'd just managed to make the sub-leaders retreat.

"Ha, even the Devatrons are no match for the Ultimate Life form!" he boasted.

The Royal Fighters came out of Empire City and they all ran up to Shadow now that his attack was over and the coast was all clear.

"Well done Shadow boy." cooed Rouge "You blew all those Devatrons away."

"Thank you Rouge." said Shadow.

"So did you retrieve the Chaos Emeralds?" asked Rouge.

"No. I was captured and experimented on by Devion." said Shadow "Metal Sonic helped me escape The Doombringer and I came back here to help you guys. The Chaos Emeralds are still in Devion's possession as I was unable to find them before getting captured and The Doombringer still stands. I have failed my mission."

"You may have failed Shadow but that does not mean all is lost." said Sally gently "We survived this attack so now we may attempt to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds again. This time, I think we should have a change of plan since Devion might expect you to come back and try again."

"I agree Sally." said Nicole "Let's return back to the research centre and think of a new plan. With Sonic & Tails still gone, this may well be our last attempt at victory so we're gonna need to seriously brain storm for now."

"Indeed Nicole." said Sally "Royal Fighters, we're returning to base."

With that said, all the Mobians went back to the Empire Research Centre where they would start brainstorming and see what plan they could come up with that would not only work, but be unpredictable and would catch the Devatrons by surprise...

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 104-105 for both events**

**** As remembered in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 107**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 70**

The Devatrons are on the ropes it seems! But how long will the Mobians remain victorious? Find out in the final part to this arc!

Last Attempt at Victory 4

Arc 13: Last Attempt at Victory

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 111-113

Part 4: Taking The Battle To Them

While the Mobians were preparing to brainstorm, the Devatron sub-leaders had returned to *The Doombringer* and they were reporting their failure to an already very angry Devion. Devion was still mad over losing Shadow the Hedgehog so the fact that his soldiers had come home to deliver him bad news was not very helpful to him. Raicor, Tronic, Triton & Steelor were all standing in a line in the cockpit of *The Doombringer* and as Devion paced up and down the line crossly, they told him exactly what had happened.

"Devion my lord." droned Tronic "We regret to inform you that we have failed our mission."

"We were beginning to overwhelm the Royal Fighters but Shadow the Hedgehog came in and…Chaos Blasted all our reinforcements to pieces." said Raicor.

Devion then suddenly lashed out and grabbed Raicor by the throat. He hoisted the Devatron off his feet and began throttling him. Good thing he'd reformed Raicor otherwise Raicor would probably start trying to mutiny against him again.

"Did he now?!" he snarled "When he removed those rings of his, did you not think to pummel him before he could use his Chaos Blast like I did earlier?!"

"Well…yes my lord…" stammered Raicor.

Devion then threw him into a wall as hard as he could. Raicor slammed into the wall and he left a huge dent in it. Raicor groaned in pain as he picked himself up and felt like his wings were about to

fall off. Devion continued to express his anger at his sub-leaders.

"Did NONE of you think to pummel Shadow before he could use his Chaos Blast like I did earlier?!" he ranted.

"No Devion." said Triton "We did not. Raicor was the first to retreat though so we thought that we should flee for it too…"

Devion backhanded Triton into the wall as furiously as he could. Triton crashed into the wall just next to Raicor and made the dent Raicor made even wider. Triton groaned like a ghoul in a graveyard after that attack.

"YOU HAVE YOUR OWN MINDS TRITON!" bellowed Devion "YOU DON'T HAVE TO RETREAT BECAUSE RAICOR IS DOING SO! YOU ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF RETREATING UNDER YOUR OWN MOTIVES!"

He then turned to Tronic and walked past him.

"Besides, Tronic is the second-in-command now, he is the one to dictate when you four should retreat!" continued Devion "Raicor had no right to retreat without Tronic's command and neither did you or Steelor, Triton!"

He then faced Tronic and glowered at him. Tronic didn't flinch or show any signs of worry.

"So Tronic, what is your excuse for not doing what I did to prevent Shadow's Chaos Blast from killing us?" he snarled.

"I have none my lord." droned Tronic "I did not expect him to use his Chaos Blast. And as he was powering up, I did not want to risk trying to stop him and getting destroyed at the same time."

"Well Devatrons, let this be a lesson to you all." said Devion coldly as Raicor and Triton rejoined the line "If Shadow ever uses his Chaos Blast again, punch him away from you as he begins to build up energy. Or even better, get out of range and let him waste it and then attack him before he can retrieve his inhibitor rings."

"Yes Devion." said the sub-leaders.

"As of now unfortunately, the Devatrons are beginning to face their darkest hour." muttered Devion, standing in front of the line and addressing the sub-leaders like a colonel in an army " *The Doombringer* is in ruins, Shadow the Hedgehog has escaped my clutches thanks to an insolent robot Sonic clone and now we've lost forty Devatron soldiers to the wretched Mobians. Even without Sonic by their side, the Mobians still fight valiantly and are becoming a nuisance for us all."

"I do wonder why Sonic isn't there to help them." wondered Steelor "The Mobian queen stated that Sonic isn't here to help them. Why would Sonic put up this great fight against us and then just disappear?"

"I do not know Steelor." said Devion "I may have crippled his back* but Sonic told me that his friends had fixed it so he is able to stand again. And when I saw the security footage of him and his friends stealing some of the Devatron's data**, I noticed he had some kind of apparatus strapped to him and it looked like it was used for supporting his back so he's capable of fighting once again. And yet he retreats from the battle."

"Do you remember that ship that took off from that space station we tried to destroy until Shadow damaged *The Doombringer* ?" asked Triton "I bet Sonic was in that ship along with his twin-tailed accomplice. His twin-tailed accomplice hasn't been seen since then either so I bet Sonic and his friend were the ones in that spaceship that flew off."

"But why would they leave Mobius to get conquered by us?" wondered Devion "There is no logical explanation behind all this. It does not matter why they left Mobius for the Devatrons on the other planets I've conquered may catch them while they're out there in space. I shall have to put them on lookout. Before that though, we need to devise a plan to turn around this conflict."

"I agree Devion." droned Tronic "We cannot lose now, not while we have been doing so well in the beginning."

"Indeed Tronic." said Devion "And fortunately, I think I have an idea that'll bring the Mobians to their doom…"

He then proceeded to walk up to the cockpit control pad and he opened a storage compartment in the pad. The compartment contained the seven power-drained Chaos Emeralds and Devion had a plan that was going to involve them….

Back at the Empire Research Centre, the Royal Fighters had all gathered around in a great big circle so they could all converse to one another. All the teams were there, Team New Mobotropolis, Team Chaotix, Team Adabat, Team Megapolis, Team Grand Metropolis and Team Nekronopolis. After narrowly surviving the titanic battle outside of Empire City earlier, the Royal Fighters were all discussing their next move and what they should. The Devatrons may be on the ropes now but it was only a matter of time until the tables were turned in the Devatron's favour again since their ship was still around and the Devatrons could just replace the number of soldiers they'd lost in that fight. A plan was needed and they were all desperately trying to devise a plan that would work and defeat the Devatrons once and for all. True doing so would end up making Sonic & Tails' little space voyage obsolete but if it meant the defeat of the Devatrons then it would be worth it.

"OK Royal Fighters, now the Devatrons have left Empire City, we can begin brain-storming and see if we can think of a plan that might help us defeat the Devatrons at long last." said Queen Sally Acorn.

"I sure hope we do because we've been getting nowhere in this stinking battle!" moaned Marik the Martian "The most we've managed to do is damage *The Doombringer* and what's happened since then? Shadow got captured and experimented on, then he escaped and helped us kill forty Devatron soldiers! Whoop-de-friggin-do! Heck, I wouldn't be too surprised if Devion cut Shadow open and put something in him like a bomb or a tracking device to catch us off guard! Since he hasn't specified in what way Devion experimented on him, we have no idea what that malicious Devatron leader has done to him!"

"All Devion did was take some of my blood and analyze it Marik!" snarled Shadow "He has not put anything in me at all so don't you dare accuse me of anything or I'll break your arm again!"

"I do wish you morons would stop bringing that stupid moment up already, you're annoying me to the point I feel like just slaughtering you all!" shouted Marik.

"Marik! Shadow! Enough!" screamed Sally "We're here to devise battle tactics, not argue with each other! In fact, Marik can leave this meeting since all he's interested in is starting arguments with people!"

Marik's eye twitched and he gritted his teeth so hard they almost cracked. He then turned his back on everybody and stormed off, swatting a bunch of test-tubes off of a nearby table in rage and he went off into another room. The test-tubes smashed onto the floor, spilling the contents everywhere. Rouge the Bat folded her arms and went "tsk-tsk" to herself.

"What a baby." muttered Rouge "Temper tantrums never helped anyone."

"I heard that!" shouted Marik from outside the door.

Rouge didn't care, she was glad she insulted Marik like this. Now Marik had left, everybody continued the meeting.

"So, has anyone got any ideas?" asked Sally.

"None that I can think of." said Miranda Mongoose, leader of the Northern Royal Fighters (or Team Nekronopolis whichever you prefer) "If my plasma-cannon wasn't destroyed then I could use that to destroy the Devatrons."

"I recovered the remains so that it may be fixed Miranda." said Kari the Rat who was standing beside Miranda with the remains of the cannon in her hands "I'll get working on fixing it immediately."

"Thanks Kari, you're a star." said Miranda sweetly "Although I wouldn't bother since we're likely to be going into battle again soon so I'd leave it for later."

Kari nodded and she put the remains of the gun down on a nearby tabletop.

"I would try my original idea again." said Shadow "But Devion will likely expect that to happen again and I have no idea where the Chaos Emeralds are so I'll just end up getting caught again."

"I wouldn't try it again either." said Ruben the Water Panther "That plan didn't work out so well and all that ended up happening was you getting captured."

"We will need to get the Chaos Emeralds back still." noted Knuckles the Echidna "We'll never get to re-power them if they remain in Devion's possession. I am beginning to wonder though why Devion didn't just destroy them when he stole them from Sonic the time he arrived here."

"Just be thankful he didn't." said Shade the Echidna "Because if he did then the only remaining Chaos Emeralds would be gone and we'd never be able to use them ever again."

"So it appears we have a couple of problems." said Sally grimly "We've got the Devatrons to defeat and the Chaos Emeralds to retrieve. We could split up into two teams and have one team fend off the Devatrons until the Chaos Emeralds are found and then Shadow could Chaos Blast *The Doombringer* to bits and that would destroy them all. But there's bound to be lots of Devatrons and they won't be easy to get through."

"If we had a Chaos Emerald or even a fragment of the Chaos Clusters then we could just use a Chaos Control on the Devatrons and freeze them." noted Shadow "But the Chaos Emeralds are power-drained and the Chaos Clusters were all swallowed up by Perfect Chaos***so they can't be of any use to us."

Just as Shadow mentioned the Chaos Clusters, Dr. Eggman suddenly began to think to himself. He and Katherine weren't in the circle with the Royal Fighters, they were just sitting around while listening in on the Royal Fighter's conversation with each other. He was particularly interested with the mentioning of "Chaos Clusters". What were they talking about? As for Katherine, the mere mention of "Chaos Clusters" made something go click inside her head and she realized something she couldn't believe she'd forgotten about. The twenty Chaos Cluster fragments she'd used to restore Dr. Eggman's

sanity****! They could use those in place of the Chaos Emeralds for this plan! Katherine tapped Dr. Eggman on the shoulder and Dr. Eggman looked at her.

"What is it Katherine?" he asked.

Katherine said nothing at all. She just showed Dr. Eggman a picture of the Chaos Cluster fragments that she had used to restore his sanity on her visor. Dr. Eggman peered at the image and he began to wonder what it was Katherine was showing him. They had colours like the Chaos Emeralds but they were only fragments so they couldn't be. Unless these were fragments of the so-called "Chaos Clusters" Shadow had just mentioned. If that was the case then maybe they'd have some edge on the Devatrons after all.

"What are you showing me Katherine?" asked Dr. Eggman.

"These **are the** *only remaining* fragments of the CHAOS CLUSTERS left that ***I used to*** restore your *sanity* ." explained Katherine through a montage of voice clips "We can USE THEM to **stop the Devatrons .** "

"What is a Chaos Cluster?" asked Eggman "A cluster of Chaos Emeralds?"

Katherine nodded.

"So you mean to tell me you had fragments of a cluster of Chaos Emeralds and you didn't tell me about them?!" screamed Dr. Eggman crossly "Katherine you nit-wit! We have the power of the Chaos Emeralds on our side and you never told me about them?!"

Katherine stood back hastily. She didn't like Eggman when he was angry, especially when he was angry at him. Why hadn't it occurred to her to tell Eggman about the emerald fragments in the first place anyway? Maybe she was so pleased to have Eggman back that she forgot to tell Eggman about the fragments. After all, even the smartest of people forget things at times. The Royal Fighters heard Eggman yelling at Katherine and they stared at him in confusion. What was up with him now?

"Excuse me Eggman?" asked Sally "What seems to be the problem?"

"Nothing." said Dr. Eggman quickly "Katherine tells me that she has some fragments of the so-called "Chaos Clusters" that Shadow mentioned a moment ago and I'm just wondering why she didn't tell me this in the first place."

Shadow looked like he had just been shot in the head.

"You have fragments of the Chaos Clusters?!" he blurted "How did your servant bot manage to get them?! I thought Perfect Chaos destroyed them all when he broke free of the Master Emerald."

"It's obvious Perfect Chaos left some bits behind Shadow dude." said Mandy Mouse "Well, this really is gonna be helpful to us all isn't it? We all know how powerful the Chaos Clusters were and if Eggman has fragments left then we have the power of the Chaos Emeralds on our side again."

"We do?" asked Dr. Eggman.

"Yes." said Amy "The Chaos Clusters were made up of hundreds of other Chaos Emeralds fused together, that explains why there's only seven left, and they had a lot of power behind them. When Sonic healed me with one I ended up becoming a Chaos Powered maniac and so did Scourge when he used it. Since Katherine's managed to find fragments of the clusters, that means we can use the power of the Chaos Emeralds against the Devatrons and beat them at last!"

"Well that is fortunate." said Dr. Eggman, grinning widely "Katherine, you continue to please me. Well done. Would have been nice if you told me about the fragments earlier."

Katherine just looked down at the floor, embarrassed over this mistake of hers.

"Well after that bit of good fortune, I think we have a plan." said Sally "Eggman will go back to his base and fetch the Chaos Cluster fragments he has and once he comes back, we shall use them to defeat the Devatrons and retrieve the Chaos Emeralds."

"This plan is probably our best chance yet." said Nicole the Lynx brightly "Let's give it a try. We have no other option so we'd best go with this one."

"I agree luv." said Geoffrey St. John "Nothing else works and the Devatrons are gonna come back stronger then ever so we'd best use this plan and get rid of them before they attack again."

"Say no more Mobians." said Dr. Eggman, grinning widely "I shall return to my hidden bunker and fetch those fragments. Katherine, you come with me since you'll know where they are."

Katherine nodded and she and Eggman left the lab to fetch the Egg-Mobile so they could fly back home to Megapolis. After moving into the centre, Eggman had taken the Egg-Mobile with him and he had parked it around the back of the building. Little did Eggman realize was that he had someone following him. It was, of course, Marik the Martian. He had overheard the entire conversation by listening by the door instead of going into another room as he had been instructed to and he was very interested in what the Royal Fighters were planning. If he followed Dr. Eggman, he could steal those fragments and have the glory of destroying the Devatrons all by himself. And once the Devatrons were destroyed, he could then use the power of the cluster fragments to destroy Mobius at last. Marik followed Eggman outside the Empire Research Centre and he waited around the corner of the building as Eggman got into the Egg-Mobile and prepared to go. Eggman and Katherine climbed into the Egg-Mobile and Eggman started the vehicle. Marik then ran around back to the front of the building and he pinched a nearby hover-saucer that was on standby and awaiting use outside. Dr. Eggman flew off in his Egg-Mobile and he headed off back home to Megapolis. Marik started the hover saucer and he followed Dr. Eggman. The hover saucer was silent and made no noise when it moved so Eggman wouldn't hear him coming and he kept his distance so Eggman wouldn't suspect he was being followed. Back in the base, the Royal Fighters turned back to each other and they continued talking.

"So once Dr. Eggman gets those emerald fragments, we're going to use them to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds and defeat the Devatrons? Is that right?" asked Cream the Rabbit.

"Yes Cream." said Cosmo the Seedrian "I hope this plan works or else Mobius will be no more and the Devatrons will move on to conquer other planets. I dread to think what would happen if they invaded my planet and tried to conquer it."

"They'd probably have Martians & Seedrians all at once fighting them since according to you, your kind and Marik's kind are at war with each other at the moment." said Amy "But I doubt even they would be a match for them."

"I don't think they would." said Cosmo "My dad's a mighty warrior but I don't think even he would be able to stop the Devatrons if they decide to target Greengate."

"With any luck, the Devatrons will never conquer another planet ever again." said Sally "For when Eggman returns, we'll use the fragments to defeat them. Royal Fighters, prepare yourselves for when Dr. Eggman comes back here, we're gonna take the battle to them!" she announced in a courageous manner that made her sound like some kind of warrior.

"Oh yeah!" the teams all cheered in unison.

It seemed that the Mobians finally had a plan that was going to work and defeat the Devatrons. The Chaos Cluster Fragments would allow the Royal Fighters to use Chaos Control and other Chaos Powers once again and they'd be able to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds and Shadow can then Chaos Blast the Devatrons all to death. If only Sonic & Tails were here to participate in this forthcoming victory and then it would be all the more special. At least they'd come back from space and realize that they've come home to a free Mobius at long last…

Back on *The Doombringer* , Devion had explained his plan to the Devatrons and now some soldiers were setting things up for the plan. A group of Devatron soldiers took the power-drained Chaos Emeralds and set them up in the middle of New Mobotropolis. Another group of soldiers were setting up some kind of device in *The Doombringer* . It looked similar to the New Mobotropolis shield

generator but its function was going to be a different function to the shield generator in New Mobotropolis. It was some kind of Devatron security system and it was part of Devion's plan. Devion and Triton were watching the set up from the cockpit of *The Doombringer* , one of the only rooms still intact on the ship. As the plan was being set up, Triton turned to Devion and spoke to him.

"Devion, I can see that you're setting up the Devatron security systems again after they were damaged by Shadow along with most of the ship but, I don't really get this plan of yours." said Triton "What's the idea behind it again?"

Devion turned to Triton and scowled at him. He didn't half get irked when he had to explain his plans over and over to his soldiers simply because they didn't get them.

"Triton you imbecile in chrome armour, the idea behind this plan makes perfect logical sense." muttered Devion "The Mobians are going to be wanting to retrieve these gems of theirs since they've been power-drained and they're going to be wanting to re-power them so they can use them to defeat us. So by setting up the Chaos Emeralds in New Mobotropolis, I'm going to lead the Mobians into my trap by asking them to come and fight for the emeralds and then the trap will spring and we shall have them all as prisoners which we shall then execute afterwards."

"Ah…now I get it." said Triton "I bet the trap's got something to do with the make-over we've given New Mobotropolis too. Setting up a Devatron laser grid generator in place of the shield-generator was the first thing we did once the population had been rounded up. We all know what happens when it senses things out of the ordinary."

"Yes." purred Devion wickedly "The laser grid generator has provided ample security before and it has helped us capture many prisoners in the past. It shall work for us again."

"This plan is brilliant." said Triton "But why are we setting a generator up in *The Doombringer* if you're going to lead them into New Mobotropolis?"

"Because I do not plan without contingencies that's why." said

Devion dryly "We never know what the Mobians may do and if we have a laser-grid generator set up in *The Doombringer* then they won't be able to infiltrate the ship like they keep trying to do."

"Ah, I know what you're thinking." deduced Triton "You're thinking the Royal Fighters might try and do two things at once. There's a lot of them so they could split up in two teams and try to infiltrate our ship and retrieve the Chaos Emeralds. Good thinking Devion."

"I know those Mobians too well Triton." said Devion coldly "It'll be in their nature to do something like that."

Then suddenly, something on the ship's cockpit started beeping and Devion went over to the control pad to see what it was. He peered at the radar on the pad and the radar was telling him that something was coming their way. Devion began to wonder what this was.

"Are the Royal Fighters making their move already?" mused Devion "They cannot be, they're not this arrogant. They'd never stage an attack so shortly after a battle. They're not like the Devatrons where because we're robots, we can go on forever without getting tired, they should be resting and recuperating first before staging an attack."

"Do you think they have some kind of plan too?" asked Triton.

"Perhaps." said Devion, watching the dots on the radar as they came nearer and nearer to *The Doombringer* .

He and Triton then went to one of the windows on the wall and they peered out of it. They saw none other then Dr. Eggman flying past New Mobotropolis in his Egg-Mobile and heading towards Green Hill Zone. Marik was following him in a hover saucer. Triton recognized Eggman instantly and so did Devion.

"Hey! It's that human who tried to align himself with us and then terminate you with that Silver Sonic abomination!" blurted Triton.

"And the Martian who tried to align himself with me is following him." Devion said in a chilling voice "Where are they going in such a hurry? This is getting suspicious. I will take a squadron of Devatrons

and follow them. Triton, tell Tronic what I'm doing and that he's in charge until I return."

"Yes sir." said Triton.

"What the human and Martian are up to is a mystery I must solve." said Devion as he turned to leave the cockpit "They cannot be up to much good and I will not allow them to escape my sights as I'm preparing to set my plan in motion."

Devion left the cockpit and he headed off out of *The Doombringer* to prepare his squad and follow Dr. Eggman and Marik. True they'd be out of view by the time he was fully set up but the vehicles he and his squad would be riding would have radars on them and he'd use them to locate Dr. Eggman and Marik. They were heading into Green Hill Zone as he was heading off out of the cockpit right now so they must be going to a familiar location of some sorts. And they were, the very place the Devatrons first landed in…Megapolis. Devion didn't know that but since he was going to follow Eggman, he'd end up returning to Megapolis and possibly finding Eggman's location. If Devion found Eggman's underground bunker then the plan would be in jeopardy and Eggman would end up being a Devatron prisoner…

As Devion left the cockpit, Triton contacted Tronic and gave him the news.

"Tronic, Devion's gone to investigate some outside activity." explained Triton "You're in charge until he gets back."

"Understood Triton." droned Tronic "We are ready to begin Devion's plan so take your stations and await their arrival."

"We're ready to begin eh?" said Triton delightedly "Cool. OK Tronic, I'll prepare myself for this. I can't wait to see the look on the Mobian's faces when they realize the whole thing was a trap! Oh wait, they'll be asleep after the Devatron laser grid gets them! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Triton continued laughing to himself as he left the cockpit and headed off to join the Devatrons in their stations for the plan. Devion

was sadly going to miss all the fun since he was following Eggman and Marik but at least he'd have something good to come home to once he'd finished investigating them. As Triton wandered down the corridors to his station, Tronic activated *The Doombringer* 's satellite dish and he aimed it in the direction of Empire City. The disc began firing out rays of discs from the centre of the dish and they headed towards Empire City. The Royal Fighters would get this message and be lead into this trap that they had so cleverly set up. What a shock the Mobians would get when they ended up becoming prisoners of the Devatrons…

Back at the Empire Research Centre, the Mobians were stuck sitting around and waiting for Dr. Eggman to return with the Chaos Cluster fragments. But they weren't doing nothing since Rouge decided to ask Shadow something.

"So Shadow, did Devion torture you really badly when he captured you?" asked Rouge.

"No. He restrained me to a restraint bed and he took some blood out of me." said Shadow "He wanted to find out more about me and what he ended up finding out just raises more questions about me."

"Like what?" asked Rouge.

"My blood apparently contains the DNA of an entirely different species of alien altogether." explained Shadow "A species even Devion doesn't know. His equipment can't decipher whose DNA it is. So I'm left wondering who made me and why have I been made into the image of a Mobian? What can my purpose possibly be if I'm made in the image of a Mobian and yet my creator supposedly isn't Mobian himself?"

Rouge put a finger to her lips and thought on Shadow's statement for a moment. This was all very interesting but at the same time, a little eerie. Shadow has the DNA of an unknown alien and yet he looks like he was created by a Mobian. What could he have possibly been created for? Rouge had no idea whatsoever.

"Well Shadow, we may find out the answers to those questions some time soon." said Rouge comfortingly "But here's one thing I'm wondering. Are you happy as you are now?"

Shadow thought for a moment and wondered what Rouge was on about.

"I…don't understand." said Shadow.

"What I mean is, you say you have a lost purpose, meaning you were created for something." explained Rouge "And since your purpose is lost and you're free to do what you want, are you happy being free and active instead of being some little tool for your creator?"

"Well…I'm not sure if I can answer that." said Shadow "I've been spending all my time trying to find answers to my past…and yet I feel like I belong here. I may have gotten off to a bad start with you all*****but since the day Eggman was exposed and I've gone my own ways I feel like this planet is where I belong. I'm not sure why. It might be the Mobian side of me. But if I'm not Mobian then I probably don't belong here and I belong on my creator's home planet."

"And yet you were made into the Mobian image so your creator must have made you like that for a reason." said Rouge coyly "Maybe your purpose has something to do with us. Maybe you're meant to protect Mobius or something in relation to Mobius and he made you like that so you'd fit in better with us."

"That would probably explain my appearance and the Chaos Energy in my veins." mused Shadow "And that theory isn't a bad one either Rouge. Maybe I was created for a purpose in relation to Mobius and that's the reason I'm made into the Mobian image. Without the proper answers though, we can only suggest at most. I hope I find the answers some day or I'll end up going mad with all these questions burning in my head."

"I'm sure we will Shadow." said Rouge affectionately, putting a hand on Shadow's arm "I'm sure we will."

Shadow brushed Rogue's arm away, clearly not interested in her affections or comfort. Rouge just scoffed at him but said nothing. Shadow could be so rude at times and that really annoyed her. But Rouge would end up having something else to think about for Bunnie Rabbot suddenly interrupted everybody.

"Hey everybody!" she cried "We're getting a message on the computer monitors!"

She pointed at the computer monitors which were beginning to go static as *The Doombringer* 's satellite dish began to tamper with it.

"We are?" said Vector the Crocodile "I hope it's Sonic & Tails with news on their space voyage!"

"I really wish I went with them since space sounds so cool!" whined Charmy Bee.

"Shut up Charmy." said Espio the Chameleon "So Bunnie, who's the message from?"

"Ah'm not sure yet, it's just beginning to come through." said Bunnie, looking at the computer screens.

The Royal Fighters gathered around the computer monitors and they watched and waited as the screens began to stop going static and an actual image was forming on the monitors. To their horror, the image was none other then Tronic himself. Just seeing Tronic made Bunnie's ears twitch with rage. How she wanted to kill Tronic for using her to free Devion from captivity and get her in trouble for it! Sally just stared at the screen and wondered what on Mobius Tronic was broadcasting a message to them for.

"Attention Mobians." droned Tronic "We have a proposition for you all."

"If it has anything to do with us surrendering to you then forget it, we're not interested!" snapped Sally impatiently.

"No, that is not why I am calling you foolish child." droned Tronic "We have you mystical gems and we've decided to fight you for them. The fight will take place in New Mobotropolis and the winner

will receive the power-drained gems. We will give you all the time you need to make up your feeble little minds."

With that said, Tronic switched off and the screens returned to normal. There was a very long silence that followed this for the Royal Fighters were completely gobsmacked. The Devatrons were going to actually wager the Chaos Emeralds on a fight?! What on Mobius were the Devatrons up to this time? They were actually going to challenge them for ownership of the emeralds?! True the emeralds were useless to the Devatrons being as they were power-drained but they took them from the Mobians so that they couldn't attempt to power them back up again. Why were they suddenly using them as a prize? Something didn't seem right here.

"That's it?" asked Geoffrey "Those blokes are asking us to fight them for the Chaos Emeralds? Bit strange for them to ask something like this."

"I agree Geoffrey and I don't like it." said Sally "This is out of character for the Devatrons. They must be planning something."

"Well they're offering the Chaos Emeralds so I say we take them up on their offer!" declared Knuckles, pounding his fists together.

"But Mr. Knuckles, what if it's a trap?" asked Cream worriedly.

"It sure sounds like a trap." said Wilson "And a very unsubtle one at that. Did they honestly think we would buy it even for a minute?"

"I bet they did." muttered Mandy "Well we're not that gullible. I say we refuse the offer whole heartedly and stick with the original plan!"

"Mandy, this maybe a good opportunity for us to retrieve the emeralds." said Cosmo "I don't think we should waste it."

"We're not wasting it." said Sally "For I have a plan. Team New Mobotropolis and Team Chaotix will retrieve the emeralds and the other teams will sneak onto *The Doombringer* and keep the Devatrons busy. If the Devatrons are being kept busy, they can't fight us for the emeralds and we can just retrieve them without a problem."

"Sally, you are a genius." said Amy "Why aren't you a Royal Fighter?!"

"Because I've got my responsibilities as queen Amy." noted Sally "I can't be a Royal Fighter and rule New Mobotropolis at the same time."

"Fair enough." said Amy "So teams, let's get back those Chaos Emeralds!"

"Oh yeah!" cried Scott Lynx, leader of Team Adabat "I look forward to blinding Devion again like I did the first time!"

"And I'm gonna make him pay for breaking Thomas Tiger's back!" declared Kiara the Cheetah, Royal Fighter and messenger woman from Megapolis.

"But what about Dr. Eggman?" asked General Bostock, leader of the Grand Metropolis Royal Fighters "If he returns and finds us gone, won't he think we've abandoned him or something?"

"We'll clear things up when we get back." said Sally "Royal Fighters, let's go and get those Chaos Emeralds!"

"It appears we're bringing the battle to the Devatrons sooner than we anticipated." mused Shadow as the Royal Fighters all left the Empire Research Centre and headed off to New Mobotropolis to carry out this new plan "Oh well, at least we'll get to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds and I'll get to Chaos Blast *The Doombringer* to pieces and wipe the Devatrons out once and for all."

Shadow smiled at the very thought of destroying the Devatrons at last. Since the Chaos Emeralds were no longer on *The Doombringer* , he didn't have to find them and he could just destroy *The Doombringer* here and now. The Devatrons were going to be finished at last once the Royal Fighters arrived on the scene…

Meanwhile, Dr. Eggman had arrived back at Megapolis at long last and he entered his secret underground bunker which was his only hiding place now that Robotropolis was no more and he couldn't be

bothered to rebuild it. A piece of the ground descended down into a staircase as he neared it and Eggman walked down it and into his underground bunker. Unbeknownst to him, Marik had followed him and now Eggman had arrived, Marik sneaked into the bunker with him before the staircase could close. Now Marik was in Dr. Eggman's only hiding place and he could cause a lot of damage here if he felt like it. He was going to steal the Chaos Cluster fragments and then destroy the Devatrons, stealing any glory the Mobians could possibly get from their destruction. But, Marik wasn't the only interference Dr. Eggman was going to end up encountering while he was here. Devion and his squadron of Devatrons had managed to follow Eggman and Marik all the way over to Megapolis too. They had rode here on hover-bikes that they had in the hangar bay of *The Doombringer* . The hover-bikes were made of chrome (of course) and they had long rods that stuck out from the front with spikes on them. They were used for skewering any enemy vehicles they might end up chasing and causing damage to them so they'd end up breaking down or losing power. They had radars and Devion had used it to track Eggman and Marik down as they rode after them. Devion and his squad parked their bikes just near Dr. Eggman's Egg-Mobile and Marik's hover saucer and they got off of them. Devion looked at the radar of his hover-bike and found out that the two were now underground.

"The human and Martian are underground." said Devion "Devatrons, set your cannon arms to cannonball mode and fire on my command."

"Yes sir." droned the soldiers, doing as they had been instructed.

They deployed their arm cannons to cannonball mode and Devion strode around looking for a good place to shoot. The staircase didn't open for him because it was only meant to open for Dr. Eggman. Devion marked the place and he prepared to give the command.

Down in the bunker, Dr. Eggman stood by and waited for Katherine to fetch the Chaos Cluster fragments. As he waited, he took a good long look around his base, realizing how much he had been missing it since he formed the truce with the Mobians. It sure felt good to be in it again.

"You never realize how much you miss your place of dwelling until you actually leave it." said Dr. Eggman "Once this battle with the Devatrons is over, I can finally call off this stupid truce with the Mobians and get back to trying to conquer Mobius for myself! How I've hated every moment of working with my despised enemies!"

"You're not the only one Dr. Eggman." sneered Marik the Martian who was standing nearby with his arms folded and a wicked smile on his face.

Dr. Eggman jumped in surprise and he turned around to see Marik the Martian standing there, smiling evilly at him. Katherine had found the Chaos Cluster fragments and she returned to Dr. Eggman with the fragments in hand. To her surprise, Marik was there too and he and Eggman were staring tensely at each other.

"Marik! How did you get here?!" demanded Dr. Eggman.

"I followed you Einstein." snorted Marik "I overheard the whole conversation about this Chaos Clusters and the fragments you have and I've decided I'm going to take them for myself! I'm going to use them to destroy the Devatrons and then once they're dead, I'm going to use them to turn Mobius into a war zone! You'd better not dare resist because you'll never beat me and you servant bot will be of no use to you too since I've battled her before and I know all her tricks."

"Oh will you?" snorted Dr. Eggman "Well then let's see if you can take them you traitor! Katherine, get him!"

Katherine put the fragments down on a nearby table and she prepared to do battle with Marik the Martian. The two bent down in a battle-ready stance and they stared each other down, preparing to unleash hell on each other. But before the two could even began to fight each other, a huge explosion erupted above their heads and huge chunks of earth began to rain down on them, allowing daylight to seep into the darkness of the bunker and lighten it up. Eggman, Katherine and Marik all leaped backwards to avoid getting crushed by the falling earth. There was now a giant hole in the ceiling and the Devatrons leaped down through the hole and into Eggman's base. The soldiers all had their arm cannons deployed and they pointed them directly at Dr. Eggman, who admittedly surrendered

and threw his arms up. Katherine foolishly tried to attack them but the Devatrons instantly shot her to pieces before she could so much as deploy her force-field. Katherine was blown to smithereens for the second time in this Devatron conflict. Dr. Eggman cried out in horror as Katherine was reduced to pieces once again.

"Katherine! Oh Katherine my poor little servant bot!" he wailed "Why did the Devatrons have to destroy you again?!"

"Silence human!" snarled Devion, pointing sharply at him "Raise your arms and don't move!"

Dr. Eggman did as he was told and he raised his arms. Marik was hiding under the table the Chaos Cluster fragments were on and he tried to see if he could get them before the Devatrons could spot him. He slowly reached his arm up onto the table and he felt around for the fragments. Unfortunately, Devion spotted him. He deployed his arm cannon and he blasted the table to bits, exposing Marik and sending the Chaos Cluster fragments everywhere. Some had been destroyed and there were only three left now. A Devatron soldier hauled Marik onto his feet and pointed his arm cannon at him. Marik grumbled furiously but he said nothing and remained still. Devion turned back to Eggman and he loomed over him.

"I remember you human." he said coldly "You tried to terminate me with Silver Sonic and actually ended up penetrating my armour. Will once you're in our grasp, you won't get the chance to repeat that feat."

"Don't be so sure Devion." said Dr. Eggman with a big smile on his face "The Royal Fighters won't be too pleased to hear that you've gone and captured me. They'll be coming to rescue me once they find out that I'm your prisoner."

"I doubt that human." said Devion coldly "The Devatrons are orchestrating a plan right now and that plan will involve the Chaos Emeralds goading them into New Mobotropolis and then getting knocked out by a trap we've placed for them…"

And just at that moment, Devion received a call from Tronic. Devion touched the side of his head and he answered the call.

"What is it?" asked Devion.

"Devion, the Mobians are coming into our parlour." droned Tronic " *The Doombringer* 's scanners confirm that the Royal Fighters are all heading to New Mobotropolis to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds."

"Excellent Tronic." said Devion gleefully "I'll await further updates. Inform me when the Mobians have been imprisoned."

"Yes Devion." droned Tronic.

Tronic shut off and Devion looked back at Dr. Eggman. Dr. Eggman began to look nervous.

"The Mobians have fallen for my trap." gloated Devion "They're heading to New Mobotropolis as we speak and once they enter the city, they're ours and you will be joining them."

Upon hearing this, Marik face-palmed himself with his organic hand and he groaned in annoyance.

"Those stupid idiots!" he muttered "They're falling for an obvious trap! How stupid can they get?! It just goes to show that a Martian cannot rely on anyone for anything! We Martians would never have fallen for such an obvious trap!"

"Silence Martian!" snarled Devion "You are joining the Mobian prisoners too so be quiet."

"Oh no I'm not!" yelled Marik "I'm leaving this stupid excuse for a planet and going back to Greengate so that I may help my father win his war with the Seedrians! You can have Mobius Devion, I've had enough of it! This planet isn't worth my time anymore!"

"Marik, you can't bail out on us all like this!" protested Dr. Eggman "We all made a truce!"

"And I'm calling it off!" blasted Marik "Those Mobians have messed things up big time and I will not waste my time helping those feeble minded idiots! If I can't rely on them to defeat you lot then there's no need for me to remain here!"

Devion was pretty surprised by all this. Marik had joined forces so that he may destroy the Devatrons and now he wants to leave? Well there was no harm in that, if Marik wanted to let him have Mobius then Devion would happily take it. At least Marik had some sense, something the Mobians lacked.

"Very well." said Devion "You are free to leave Mobius Marik. But should you set foot on Mobius again, or if you bring a fleet of Martians here in an attempt to destroy us then I will target Mars next."

"You have my word that I will not return to Mobius." said Marik "This planet is nothing to me anymore."

"Good show." said Devion "Now how do you plan to leave Mobius then? Do you have a spaceship?"

"No, but I'm going to use this." said Marik, picking up one of the only remaining Chaos Cluster fragments.

As he prepared to use it, he began to think to himself.

Mobius is dead to me and the Devatrons can have it. But I might just return and see how the Devatrons are doing and if the Mobians have won by some miracle then I'll bring my family and friends over to Mobius to destroy it. After all, the Martians won't fail at destroying Mobius should it survive the Devatrons… he thought to himself.

He held the fragment above his head and he yelled "Chaos… CONTROL!"

The fragment glowed a bright dazzling glow that filled the room top to bottom and Marik vanished into thin-air, much to the bewilderment of the Devatrons. Dr. Eggman was plenty furious with Marik for abandoning Mobius and leaving it to get conquered by the Devatrons. Just wait until he told the others! They'd be furious with him too. Now Marik had gone, Devion turned back to Dr. Eggman.

"The Martian has just proven he is more clever then you and your Mobian friends human." crowed Devion "Pity you and the Mobians succumb to your own hubris and delay the inevitable. Well, this

conflict will end at long last once the Mobians are all imprisoned. Later today, we shall have an execution circle and you will be part of it Dr. Eggman."

"No Devion please! You can't!" begged Dr. Eggman.

"I can heathen and I will." said Devion icily "Nothing can stop me and the Devatrons will claim this planet as its own. And once Mobius is ours, we shall move onto Earth. I do hope Earth's take over will be every bit as entertaining as this take-over has been."

Dr. Eggman began to sweat madly and he gulped as Devion stared directly into his eyes. Devion then turned around and barked at his soldiers.

"Soldiers! We're returning to base!" he ordered "Take the human with us."

The soldiers obeyed and they left Eggman's bunker with Eggman in tow. The Devatrons all got onto their hover-bikes and they started them up. They had managed to capture Dr. Eggman and Marik had left Mobius for good. Now all that was left was for the Mobians to be imprisoned and given how they were falling for his trap, that was pretty much inevitable…

Meanwhile, the Royal Fighters had arrived at New Mobotropolis at last and the teams had split up as they had planned earlier. Team New Mobotropolis and Team Chaotix were going for the emeralds and the other teams were distracting the Devatrons so they could steal the emeralds without a problem. The other teams headed towards *The Doombringer* while Team New Mobotropolis and Team Chaotix headed to the gates of New Mobotropolis. Even though the city had been taken over by the Devatrons, there hadn't been that much changes to it. The only changes really were the shield-generator being gone and the fact the city had no citizens left since they had all been rescued and evacuated to Empire City. This whole thing looked like it was going to be easier than they thought. As a matter of fact, the gates were even open for the Royal Fighters as if they were being invited into the city by the Devatrons. Sally couldn't

understand this. She was expecting maybe a little resistance from the Devatrons, perhaps some Devatrons standing guard and yet there was nothing there.

"This is strange." thought Sally "The Devatrons have taken over our city and yet they're not putting up much of an effort to keep us out. It's like they don't care about the city anymore and they want us to take it back."

"They're lying in wait for us I bet." said Shadow "This smells like a planned ambush well we are not going to fall for it."

"Especially as we have your Chaos Blast Shadow, you can just blast them all back before they can even get us." said Rouge.

"Indeed Rouge." said Shadow with a gloating smirk on his face.

"OK everybody, let's go in." said Sally slowly "But be careful. This is definitely some kind of trap. The Devatrons on the ship will be kept busy so we can't expect them to suddenly attack us."

"OK Sally." said the Mobians.

The Royal Fighters and Team Chaotix all crept into New Mobotropolis as slowly and as silently as they possibly could, their eyes on the alert for any kind of trap. The moment they were all in the city though, the gates suddenly closed behind them, trapping them inside the city and making them all jump. Then suddenly, a yellow laser grid formed out from behind Castle Acorn and it began to move towards the Mobians at a terrific speed. Sally only had just enough time to scream:

"It was a trap! A laser grid's coming this way! Everybody, run for it before…"

She was cut off as the laser grid swept through the Mobians and they were all brutally electrocuted by the grid. The Mobians all screamed at the top of their voices as they were shocked by the grid and then they all collapsed onto the ground, completely unconscious but all of them alive. They would be knocked out for quite a while though. That was the trap Devion had set up, a laser grid that

knocks its opponents out when it touches them. The only thing it didn't effect were the Devatrons themselves. Speaking of Devatrons, Tronic and a squadron of Devatrons had been hiding in the city itself and they had been waiting for the grid to knock the Mobians out. Now they had been knocked out, the Devatrons ran over to them and seized their unconscious bodies. They were going to take them all to *The Doombringer* and imprison them until Devion came back and then they were going to execute them all one by one. The Mobian's days were numbered at last…

As for *The Doombringer* , to add insult to injury, had also been installed with a laser-grid generator too and the moment the other teams had stepped into the ship, the grid activated and it had swept through *The Doombringer* , touched them, and knocked them all out. Devion had installed it as a contingency plan and it was a good thing he did because now he would have every Royal Fighter as a prisoner and they could execute them all. After the other teams had been knocked out, Raicor, Triton & Steelor ran down to the bottom floors of *The Doombringer* and seized all their unconscious bodies. They were pleased to see the plan had worked and that they had been stupid enough to fall for it.

"Those Mobians are the embodiment of fatuity!" crowed Raicor "They fell for our pretence and now they're all in our grasp!"

"They're prisoners of the Devatrons at long last." said Triton "Devion's gonna be real pleased when he sees all this!"

"Indeed Triton." agreed Steelor "Our battle with the Mobians will finally end and Mobius can be added to our collection of conquered planets. The whole battle has been an amusing and an annoying conflict but now it's finally over and the Mobians will cease to be at last."

"Sonic and his twin-tailed friend maybe absent but should they show up, we'll kill them too and the Devatrons will have no resistance when we spread our reign to the outer regions of Mobius." crowed Raicor "Now, let us take these prisoners to the prison chamber and hold them there until Devion returns. I look forward to the execution circle. When it happens, I will kill the rest of that eagle woman's team first."

"I'm gonna kill that stupid pink girl in the hideous dress and that trio of Mobians which consisted of two reptilian creatures and a buzzing thing." said Triton "They're my most hated."

"And I will execute the cyborg rabbit I used to save Devion." droned Tronic.

The Devatrons began to have very evil thoughts in their heads about the Mobians and their executions. The Devatron's darkest hour was now becoming their lightest hour once again and they were finally going to emerge victorious and conquer Mobius once and for all. All was hopeless and not even Sonic & Tails would be able to help them for they were being pursued by Devatrons in space as of this moment…

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 110-111**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 92**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 95**

******* He sure did in the Shadow saga (*Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 57-63) as we all remember! Right?**

HOLY...CRRAAAAAAPPPPPP! This is it! It's the end of the Royal Fighters everybody! Mobius is doomed! The Devatrons have won! Or have they...? Tune back in to* Heroes of Mobius *for the three part finale to the Devatron saga!

As for this story, we're going back to Chun-Nan in the next arc as Matilda battles her inner struggles and distrubing visions...

A Few Steps To A Conquering Storm 1

Arc 14:A Few Steps To An Oncoming Storm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 113-115

Part 1: First Step Is A Breeze

When the Devatrons had arrived to Mobius, they let the whole world know of their existence. But only one country did not hear of the Devatrons, nor did they get their message when they arrived. And that country was Chun-Nan. Chun-Nan was a very old-fashioned and traditional country and they had very little technology there. No TVs, no computers, no radios, no phones of any kind, nothing whatsoever. So the whole of Chun-Nan had been completely in the dark about the Devatron invasion and this clearly explained the reason as to why none of Chun-Nan's heroes have joined in the battle. Word may travel fast around Chun-Nan but since the whole country had no knowledge of the Devatrons, they had word to travel around. Only rumours and possible bits of news. Son any knowledge about the Devatrons in Chun-Nan was vague and the citizens of Chun-Nan had been wondering whether or not they should join in with this match or not. But one person wasn't wondering about the Devatron invasion and if it was real or just rumour. And that person was Princess Matilda, Chun-Nan's mightiest fighter and the grace and beauty of the country. It was night time at this very moment and Matilda was sleeping away in her bed. Unfortunately, she wouldn't be sleeping for long. The reason being for that is she was having a nightmare. This nightmare was her nightmarish vision she had received the day Ruben lost his aqua-collar to Hydra. It was very unsettling for poor Matilda. She lay in her bed tossing and turning and mumbling under her breath as the nightmare continued…

In the nightmare, Matilda ran through a ravaged Chun-Nan and the sight of destruction appalled her. Homes were on fire, temples were collapsing and the Pagoda of Prosperity was in ruins. A horrific

ruination this truly was. Who could have done this? That's what Matilda was running through the streets of the ravaged village for, she was looking for the culprits. It didn't take her long to find them though for they were waiting for her at the end of the village. The villains that did this were all in silhouette though so Matilda couldn't see who they were. Matilda raised her fists and prepared to do battle.

"Who are you fiends?" demanded Matilda "And why have you done this to Chun-Nan?!"

The silhouetted warriors didn't say a word. They just stood up straight, turned to one side and bowed down to somebody. Matilda wondered what they were doing and she turned to her left and saw who they were bowing to. Another silhouetted figure stood atop a burning restaurant and it glowered at Matilda with cold emotionless eyes that seemed to burn like the fire around it. Matilda couldn't see who it was but she assumed it was unfriendly and that it was possibly the leader as the warriors were bowing to it. She prepared to do battle but the warriors got the drop on her by pouncing on the princess and pinning her down. Matilda tried to wrestle them all off of herself but despite her strength and battle prowess, evens he wasn't strong enough to fight through all these enemies and push them off of herself. The leader of the gang jumped down from the building and drew out a long katana blade. Matilda, powerless before the villain and unable to move, could only stare at the katana blade as the villain lifted it above its head and prepared to slice her in two with it. Matilda closed her eyes and waited for the killer blow. The villain swung the katana towards Matilda's head…

"NOOO!" screamed Matilda, suddenly waking up from the nightmare.

She sat up in her bed, panting and gasping and her heart pounding like a drum band. A cold sweat ran down her forehead. Matilda looked around and realized she was still in her bedroom, it was still night time and everything was alright. Matilda put a hand over her beating chest and sighed, flopping back down on the bed.

"It was only a dream." she whispered to herself "Everything's alright."

That was easy enough for her to say but thinking everything was alright as no easy task for Matilda. Especially as she's a bit of a worry guts at times. Poor Matilda often found it hard to relax and subside the bad thoughts for a while and just focus on what's important. And right now, this nightmarish vision she kept having was bugging her like mad. She'd been having these visions for four weeks and two days now and they still continued to haunt her. That was one of the downfalls of being a kung-fu master. You have visionary abilities that suggest future events or are just red herrings brought on by negative emotions. Matilda couldn't understand why she kept getting these visions. Were they foreshadowing events that were yet to come? If so then what did that mean for the people of Chun-Nan? Would Chun-Nan be destroyed? Were these villains going to take over the city and rule Chun-Nan with an iron fist? And if so, who were the villains behind it all? Were they an oncoming threat that's been unheard of until now? Or were they someone she knew who were only pretending to be allies? So many questions and so many answers to find for them all. Matilda ran her fingers through her hair and she groaned exhaustedly to herself.

"Why do I keep having this nightmarish vision? And what's it supposed to mean?" she moaned to herself.

This was a question that she was not going to immediately find the answer to. It might even be a question she'll never find the answer to. But she was going to find the answer at some point and it was going to be horrifying for her and everybody…

The next morning, Matilda had forced herself up, despite the fact she was tired from lack of sleep last night, and was at her master's lair ready to continue her training. Her master was a vigilante kung-fu master named Kai Zen and he was the person responsible for her amazing power and skills. He'd been training Matilda since she was just a child and as of now, he has been working vigorously to getting Matilda at the expert stage of kung-fu. The expert stage was never an easy stage to accomplish and Matilda was one of the few to actually dare to try this stage. Unfortunately, she was not ready for her training today because she was just too tired. The nightmare had kept her up for the rest of the night and she was slowly starting

to nod off as Master Kai began talking to her, pacing up and down as he did so.

"Your road to the expert stage is almost complete Matilda." explained Master Kai "The only step left for you to climb on the ladder is the step to inner peace. When you learn inner peace, you will become a powerful force to be reckoned with and you will be almost impossible to defeat. Inner peace makes a kung-fu warrior a very powerful ally and until you master inner peace, you will never make it to the expert stage Matilda. So are you…"

He stopped pacing around and stared at Matilda, who had just slumped onto the floor and fallen asleep. She began snoring peacefully away on the floor. Master Kai glared at her crossly and he folded his arms.

"Falling asleep during my lessons are you?" he snorted "Well, you shall now experience what it's like to fall asleep in my lessons Matilda."

Master Kai sauntered over to a nearby table top and he grabbed a thick, wooden kendo stick. These were often used in training matches and swordplay practice and Kai often smacked naughty pupils with it to punish them. Master Kai stood before Matilda and he raised the stick above his head. He smacked the floor with the stick just centimetres in front of Matilda's face and the mongoose was wide awake and on her knees in one second flat.

"I'm up! I'm up! I'm up!" shrieked Matilda quickly, forcing her eyes to open widely and sitting to attention.

Master Kai tapped the floor with the stick and he continued to glower at his star pupil.

"Dear child, why are you falling asleep in my lessons?" demanded Master Kai "You've never done this before. You're always wide-eyed and alert like the early bird that's hunting for its worm dinner."

"I'm fine master really." lied Matilda "I'm not really sure why I dozed off there for a second."

She didn't really want to talk about her nightmare to Master Kai in the middle of her kung-fu lessons. However, the mysterious kung-fu master didn't buy her act for a minute. He knew something was wrong with the princess and he was going to find out.

"Do not fill this cavern with lies Matilda." said Master Kai coldly "I can tell that there's something wrong with you. I can see it in your eyes child. Your eyes look weary, un-rested and droopy. They tell me that you've had a bad night last night. Care to explain?"

Matilda fumed to herself. Master Kai was impossible to lie to. He could detect any signs of lying and he could tell if there was something wrong with you just by looking at you. Master Kai was definitely a very observant kung-fu expert and you would never catch him out. Matilda decided not to lie to her master anymore and that she should just come clean and tell the truth as to why she's so tired. After all, it was better to tell the truth then lie to your master. Matilda sighed and she looked up at Master Kai, who had his arms folded and was waiting for an answer.

"I'm sorry for lying to you master." said Matilda apologetically "Here's the truth: I had a nightmare last night and it kept me up for the rest of the night."

Master Kai put a finger to his chin and he knelt down on the floor in front of Matilda.

"You've had a nightmare Matilda?" he mused "Nightmares can be truly dreadful. I've had many nightmares before and they've come close to disrupting my kung-fu skills in the past."

"You've had nightmares too?" asked Matilda.

"Nobody goes through life without having a nightmare at least once." said Master Kai softly "So what was this nightmare about then my child?"

"It was that nightmarish vision I had four weeks and two days ago." said Matilda "You know, that one about me running through the ravaged streets of Chun-Nan and then getting ambushed by unknown assailants. Well this one ended with me getting my head

severed off by the assailant's leader, who wielded a katana. I've been having these visions repeatedly for days now and it's really worrying me. Is it symbolizing events that will be or are they constantly being brought upon by negative emotions?"

"Well Matilda have you got anything worrying on your mind at all?" asked Master Kai.

"Well…yes really." said Matilda quietly "There is of course Zira the Ruthless escaping again although that's likely never to happen again, the Yīnyǐng Mao's possible next attack and these visions I keep having. Maybe all this is bringing on negative emotions and therefore, keep making me have them."

"It is a possibility." said Master Kai thoughtfully "This is why you must master inner peace dear. Inner peace helps you subside negative emotions and you're less likely to get visions of the horrifying kind. Although there is the possibility it isn't negative emotions and the vision is foreshadowing events that are yet to come. While they may happen, they may not happen exactly as envisioned."

"So Chun-Nan might not get ravaged like the vision suggests and I might not actually die like the vision foretells?" asked Matilda.

"Possibly." said Master Kai "However, for the time being, you should not let your visions continue to worry you and try to think more positively. Just remember, the vision may not come true and you mustn't be concerned about it until the vision actually begins to unfold before you. If it does then you must find the best way possible to prevent it from happening as envisioned. Understand child?"

"Yes master." said Matilda softly "Thank you for trying to put my fears to rest."

"It is nothing at all princess." said Master Kai gently "You are the princess of Chun-Nan who, for the good of the country, is learning kung-fu and I am your teacher. I cannot teach a worried student and a worried princess cannot rule a country properly so I'm doing my best to help you keep your spirits up so that you do not falter in your tasks. You've been an honour to teach Matilda and I cannot fail you

by not helping you deal with your emotional problems and fears. That would be the dis-honouree thing for me to do so putting your fears to rest is what I must do not just for you but for everybody."

"I agree master." said Matilda "And I'm grateful you're so willing to help me through my fears so that I may complete my training. You're a wonderful teacher and I'm glad you're my master."

"And I'm glad to have the honour of teaching such a wonderful young woman who's mind and heart are always in the right place." said Master Kai brightly.

If he wasn't wearing his eerie dragon mask like he always did, you would see a warm smile that could make anybody feel good, even the mentally depressed individuals.

"Now then princess, I want you to go home and get some much needed sleep." said Master Kai "You're too tired to take on my lessons today. You may come back later today when you feel more awake for I have no appointments with any other pupils today."

"No please master, I'm ready and willing to take on my lessons today…yawn…I can't miss out on these ones." said Matilda tiredly.

"Forcing a tired student to perform vagarious martial arts training is dis-honouree and strains the student needlessly." said Master Kai coldly "The student must be awake and ready to train when taking these lessons. I cannot teach you if you're too tired to train Matilda so please, go home and rest up. You need your rest after all."

"Yes…yawn…master." yawned Matilda "I'm so sorry about all this."

"Don't be, nightmares cannot be helped and everybody has a bad night at some point in their lives." said Master Kai kindly "I shall see you when you've rested up my child. Goodbye for now."

"Goodbye master." said Matilda, getting up off her knees and leaving Master Kai's secret lair so that she may head off back to the Pagoda of Prosperity.

Once she got home, she was going to get a nice sleep and then return to do her training for the day. Matilda was going to master the

expert stage and nothing, not even those visions she kept having were going to stop her from doing so. But unbeknownst to Matilda, her vision was going to come true and not in the way she was expecting at all…

Over at the Raiju Clan's fortress, the Bride of the Conquering Storm was sitting idly by in her throne and watching some Raiju ninjas train with each other. She tapped the arms of her throne with her fingers and she watched with a bored expression on her face as her ninjas fought one another. Conquering Storm usually enjoyed watching training sessions as she got to watch her mighty clan show off how great and powerful they were. Today though, the clan wasn't really performing anything special in this training match. They were just doing the same generic moves that they had been practicing for a while now. One ninja performed a spinning kick move on another ninja which in turn, tripped the ninja up and brought it down on the floor. The tripped up ninja leaped back onto its feet and it retaliated by giving the ninja that tripped it up a powerful uppercut that almost knocked it off its feet.

"Well thrown uppercut soldier." complimented Conquering Storm dryly.

Another pair of ninjas displayed their skill by leaping at each other in a leaping kick attack. The first ninja however was more cunning then the other ninja and it showed of its cunning and skill in this leaping kick. As the second ninja neared towards it, the first ninja aimed its foot under the second ninja's leg and then swung his leg up, causing the second ninja to topple backwards and land rather sharply on his back. The ninja groaned in pain and he rubbed his spine better. The cunning ninja smirked at the other ninja, feeling good about himself and pleased with how well his counter-attack and performed in this match.

"Excellent blockage Pi Kou." praised Conquering Storm, her expression brightening up as she hadn't seen many of her ninjas do this before "You shall be a fine warrior in battle with skills like this."

"Thank you Ma'Am." said Pi Kou with a bow to his mistress.

Pi Kou should have known better then divert his attention from the battle to Conquering Storm though. For his opponent just decided to sneak up behind him and then tackle him down from behind. Pi Kou yelped as the ninja he was fighting pounced on him and knocked him down onto the floor. Conquering Storm watched this happen and could only face palm herself in annoyance at that big goof up of Pi Kou's.

"Do not divert your attention in a battle you fool!" snarled Conquering Storm "Your enemies will get the drop on you and defeat you if you do so!"

"Sorry Ma'Am." said Pi Kou as his opponents grabbed one of his arms and forced it behind his back.

Conquering Storm fumed at Pi Kou, regretting praising him earlier since he was just making a big fool of himself right now. Conquering Storm leaded against one of the throne arms and rested her head on her hand in a bored manner. She couldn't wait to commence with her goals of conquest and domination. The Raiju Clan would never be bored again and they would be able to beat up whoever they like and just for the fun of it too. It would be endless fun for the Raiju Clan when they finally conquered Chun-Nan. Conquering Storm thought to herself and wondered on a very important manner: was it time for the clan's grand plan to come into fruition? Conquering Storm had been devising her plan ever since the defeat of Zira the Ruthless* and she'd been buying her time in order to leave Chun-Nan completely in the dark of the Raiju Clan's true motives and to make her attack and take over less predictable. The only problem was the fact Princess Matilda knew kung-fu and excelled greatly in it. This had led Conquering Storm to taking more vigorous exercising and training to make fully sure that she could defeat Matilda should the two ever meet but just recently, she had come up with an even better idea. Why fight Matilda when she can just as easily get Matilda to fight FOR the clan? Conquering Storm's first sinister step in her plan involved tricking Matilda into joining the Raiju Clan and she knew how to do that. The question she wondered though was is it time to begin the plan? Well it had been a year since Zira's defeat and incarceration and Chun-Nan believes that the Raiju Clan are Chun-Nan's saviours so maybe it is the right time to strike. Maybe

the plan should begin and then the Raiju Clan could take its first step up the stairway to power, conquest and glory. Conquering Storm then thought about what she had learned from her parents at a young age. "The Raiju Clan is destined for power greater then any ninja clan has ever had before and the best road to this kind of power is the road of subtlety. Lead your enemies under pretence for as long as you deem appropriate and then strike at their least anticipated opportunity." Conquering Storm repeated those words to herself in her head several times and made up her mind at last. The plan must begin. The Raiju Clan's road to power had to begin and the first step up the stairway to conquest had to be climbed. No more waiting. No more buying their time. The wait ended here and the plan begins now. Conquering Storm sat up straight and barked aloud.

"Ninjas! Wán**!"

The Raiju Clan ninjas all stopped training and they looked over at their bride who just glowered back at them with her burning orange eyes. Conquering Storm stood up from her throne and she put her hands behind her back. She wore the same kind of stern, dry expression she was almost always seen with.

"The time has come my glorious ninjas." she said "The time has come for the Raiju Clan to finally conquer this holy country and prove that it is the most powerful ninja clan in all of Chun-Nan. It has been the Raiju Clan's destiny to rule the country and I shall become the bride to make that happen. Are you all ready to become rulers and not mere citizens and ninja warriors?"

"YEAH!" cried the crowd of ninjas before her in unison.

"Are you ready to climb the stairway to power?" asked Conquering Storm "Are you ready to claim what is ours, to become the most powerful ninja clan in the history of Chun-Nan? Are you also ready to gain what is most important to us all, honour, glory and power?!"

"YEAH!" repeated the crowed once again.

"Then let us commence with our plan." said Conquering Storm with a slimy smirk on her evil face "Dàfēng Rai!" she barked at her star

ninja "See to it that the dear princess gets her little "invitation card" will you?"

"It will be done without problem my dear." said Rai, bowing down loyally to his ninja bride.

"I know Rai." said Conquering Storm dryly "Ever since that irksome hedgehog convinced me to let you live after you lost that duel of honour to him***, you've not failed me in anything. We shall await your return and once the princess arrives, we shall commence with the next step of the plan."

"Yes Conquering Storm." said Rai, getting up to his feet and leaving the room.

Conquering Storm watched as Rai left the room to commence with the first step of her insidious plan. After Rai left the room, she gave one last order to her ninjas before sitting back down on her throne.

"You may continue with your training ninjas." she said.

The ninjas all obeyed and they continued training with each other. Conquering Storm sat down in her throne and she began to picture a conquered Chun-Nan full of citizens trembling in fear before her and her clan as she stood proudly above them all in her fortress. The Raiju Clan had been patiently waiting years for this moment and now it was beginning to come. Any time soon, the Raiju Clan would make its move and Chun-Nan would be theirs at long last…

Back at the Pagoda of Prosperity, Matilda had told her father, Emperor Dalon Tai, why she had come home from her training early and that she needed to catch up on her sleep. Matilda went into the living room and she lay down on the big soft cushions that lay around the room for the guests to sit on or lie on. After making herself comfortable, she closed her eyes and fell asleep in a matter of minutes. The princess was soon sound asleep and snoring away quite peacefully on the silk cushions. As Matilda snoozed away, she began to dream again. This time though, it was a pleasant dream. This dream was about Matilda's more pleasant days of her life such

as learning the skills of kung-fu and confessing her love for Bladefeather to him after he'd confessed his love to her. The two had been dating each other for a long time since then and Matilda had enjoyed every moment she'd spent with Bladefeather. Bladefeather was a wonderful man, despite his pedantic nature and hatred of children, and Matilda couldn't help but love him. If the two decided to marry each other, Bladefeather would be the perfect emperor to rule alongside her as she ruled in Tai's stead as Empress Matilda. Becoming empress was one moment Matilda was concerned about, especially since as an empress, she'd have a lot of responsibilities under her belt and it was a matter of would she live up to her father or would she disgrace his image? Tai was going nowhere anytime soon though so Matilda didn't have to worry too much about that yet. One thing for sure though was when she eventually takes the throne, Bladefeather will be there to back her up and will support her every step of the way. This dream about her wonderful life in Chun-Nan was definitely much lovelier then the nightmare she had last night. Maybe the visions were being brought on by negative emotions after all because Matilda had fallen asleep thinking lovely thoughts. And now these lovely thoughts of hers were being projected into a dream as she snoozed quietly away. She was definitely going to catch up on her sleep and be back over at Master Kai's underground lair to start training at this rate.

But she was soon about to get a rude wake up call for Dàfēng Rai arrived at the Pagoda of Prosperity with a bow and arrow in his hand. He stood at the bottom of the hill the Pagoda of Prosperity was standing on and he aimed the arrow at the pagoda.

"I bet the pretty little princess will fall for this plan of ours." he sneered to himself as he pulled the string of the bow back and prepared to let go.

Rai aimed the arrow at the door of the pagoda and he pulled the string of the bow as far back as he could. He then let go of the string and the arrow shot out of from the bow and whooshed towards the door of the pagoda. The arrow hit the target and embedded itself into the door. The tip of the arrow was so sharp that it ended up sticking out through the other side of the door! Rai smiled to himself, seeing his mission had been accomplished and he ran for it before

anyone could see him. The sound of the arrow embedding itself into the door woke Matilda up with a start and she sat up on her cushion.

"What was that?!" she cried.

Emperor Tai had heard the arrow too and he ran into the room to see what had happened and what the noise was.

"Matilda dearest, did you hear that noise?" asked Tai.

"I did daddy." said Matilda "I'm wondering what it was. It came from the door."

The two mongooses ran over to the door and they slid it open (the doors of the pagoda slide open). They peeked outside and looked at the front of the door. There was an arrow embedded in it and it had a piece of paper attached to it. Ninjas delivered messages like this so Matilda instantly had an idea on what was going on.

"It's an arrow and there's a message tied to it." said Matilda "We must be getting a message from a ninja clan or something."

"It might be from the Raiju Clan itself since they're one of the few ninja clans around these days." said Tai "I do wish they didn't have to use arrows as a way of delivering messages though. It doesn't half startle me when the arrow hits the door."

Tai pulled the arrow out of the door and he untied the note that it had come with. He dropped the arrow down onto the ground and he read it very closely. His eyes widened for a moment after reading it and he handed it over to Matilda.

"It's for your sweetheart." he said "It's from the Bride of the Conquering Storm herself."

"Conquering Storm herself?" blurted Matilda, taking the note from Tai "What does she want me for?"

She unfolded the note and she read it to herself. The note said:

Greetings Princess Dalon Matilda of Chun-Nan,

This very message you have been given is from me, the Bride of the Conquering Storm, the leader of the Raiju Clan herself and I am going to respectfully ask for you to bless the clan with your appearance as we have matters of the seminal kind to discuss with you. You may not bring the emperor with you but you may tell him what we've told you when you get back. The back of the note will give you directions to our fortress that allow you to bypass our challenges as you do not need to go through them to reach our temple, you're honouree enough to visit us without needing to conquer our tests. We await your arrival princess.

Yours sincerely, The Bride of the Conquering Storm.

Matilda's eyes widened with surprise at the note and she folded it up very quickly.

"Conquering Storm wants to see me." she said "She has important matters to discuss with me and she doesn't want you to come. I am however allowed to tell you what she wants to tell me."

"Well I shall respect Conquering Storm's wishes." said Emperor Tai "I'll wait here for you Matilda while you go and answer Conquering Storm's summons. I hope she's got something good to tell you."

"It might be about the water panther's missing collars and if she's found Hydra, the thief who stole them, yet." said Matilda brightly "I'll go and see what Conquering Storm wants dad. I'll be back soon."

She hugged Emperor Tai goodbye and then she ran off to visit Conquering Storm's fortress so that she may see what the Raiju Clan wants her for. Emperor Tai waved Matilda goodbye and went back into the pagoda to wait for her return.

"I wonder what Conquering Storm wants Matilda for…" he mused to himself "And why my precious daughter in particular…"

He was going to find the answer sometime soon…

An hour later, Matilda arrived at the Raiju Clan's fortress. She had followed the directions on the back of the note so she bypassed the

Land of the Stepping Stones and the Plains of Deception, the very traps that normal people had to get through to prove they were mighty enough and worthy of visiting the Raiju Clan. This was the first time she had ever seen the temple in person and she was quite impressed by its formidable appearance. Truly fitting for a clan of might and power. Matilda walked up to the entrance, which had a guard at the door, and she looked up at it.

"Hello." she said politely "I'm Princess Matilda and I've been summoned to your territory by Conquering Storm herself. Please may I enter?"

The guard, in on Conquering Storm's plan and knowing fully of what he should do, bowed down respectfully to the princess and he stood to the side, allowing Matilda to enter the fortress. The colossal doors opened, revealing a large hallway that stretched for a few feet inside the fortress, and Matilda walked through the hallway. Matilda looked all around her and was well impressed with this hall. There were many statues of the Raiju Clan's ancestors and there were Chinese style portraits of the clan's last master before Conquering Storm. The Raiju Clan's flag, which was a lightning bolt dagger with a cloud in the background, hung proudly above the entrance to the throne room at the end of the hall. Matilda walked up to the door to the throne room and she knocked on it. Nobody answered so Matilda peeked inside to see if there was anyone home. She saw why nobody answered her knocks. The Raiju Clan was still in training session but this time, Conquering Storm was joining in the training. She had taken off her shirt for this session. Her entire torso up to the chest was wrapped in bandages, similar to how ninja masters dressed with enormous sashes on occasion. Matilda stepped quietly into the throne room and she stood by the door, watching Conquering Storm train with her fellow ninjas. One ninja leaped towards Conquering Storm with a katana in his hands and he tried to slash Conquering Storm but the lynx in the coolie hat jumped backwards to dodge the attack and then she jumped onto the ninja. She landed on his shoulders and grasped his head between her feet. She flipped forward onto her hands, her feet hoisting the ninja off the floor, and she swung her legs around. She threw the ninja into another ninja with her legs and she jumped back up onto her feet. She spotted Matilda standing quietly by the door in the corner

of her eye and she looked over at her.

"Ah, princess. One moment." she said to the mongoose in the purple dress.

Two ninjas charged towards Conquering Storm with clubs in their hands. They tried to bash Conquering Storm with them but Conquering Strom bent over backwards to dodge the clubs. She then thrust herself forwards and head-butted one of the ninjas on the bridge of his nose. The ninja screamed in pain and he clutched his throbbing nose. Conquering Storm then lashed out with her leg and kicked the other ninja in the gut. She then swung the ninja across the room with her foot and sent the ninja skidding across the floor. She then signalled for the clan to cease their training for now. She picked up her shirt and she slipped it back on, remembering to reattach her belt around the waist section after she'd put it back on. Matilda stepped shyly forward and the Raiju Ninjas all bowed down to her respectfully.

"Please, don't make a fuss over me because I'm the princess." said Matilda politely.

"At ease ninjas." said Conquering Storm bluntly.

The ninjas stopped bowing to her and they stood to attention. Matilda walked up to Conquering Storm and she stood before the powerful lynx with the fiery orange eyes.

"Welcome to my fortress Matilda." said Conquering Storm "The Raiju Clan has honoured to have your presence here today princess. Your strength and skill has amazed us all and we're all proud to have you ruling over this country."

"Thank you…Conquering Storm." said Matilda, blushing bright red with pleasure "It's all nothing really…I…I'm j-just doing my bit for this h-holy country."

"Yes you are." said Conquering Storm "So Matilda, I can see that you received my note and I'm pleased you could spare the time to answer my summons."

"I'm just happy to come Conquering Storm." said Matilda, handing the note back over to Conquering Storm "So, why do you require my presence here then Raiju Clan? Is there something you need me to do for you?"

"Yes." said Conquering Storm, keeping her face straight and looking as stoic as ever "There are seminal matters to discuss and we require your presence because you are one of Chun-Nan's strongest warriors and you must be informed on these matters more then anyone else in the country."

"Oh." said Matilda in surprise "It must be serious then if I'm needed."

"It is serious my honouree ruler." said Conquering Storm, her face tensing up into a bit of a scowl "Very serious. You know what's happened to those poor little water panthers recently don't you?"

"I do indeed." said Matilda "Do you want to tell me about your progress in finding Hydra?"

"No." said Conquering Storm "Although the matters of the missing aqua-collars are in relation to these serious matters I am about to inform you about. We have found out that Hydra only robbed the water panthers of their aqua-collars because he was blackmailed into doing so by an evil and anonymous force that has been unseen until now."

Matilda gasped in surprise and she put her hands over her chest.

"Hydra was…? Oh my! Poor Hydra! He was forced into doing this? How awful!" she cried "Ruben's going to be horrified when he hears this!"

"I know." said Conquering Storm grimly "After finding this out, I sent my best spies to find out more about this evil force that has shown it's face for the first time in Chun-Nan history. Their findings have come with very distressing revelations. This evil force is a clan of kung-fu warriors that live outside Chun-Nan's borders and they have been working their insidious tentacles around the very aspects of Mobius itself, hoping to conquer not just Chun-Nan but the whole world. They are a clan dedicated to achieving power through

unspeakable evil methods. These methods range from crime, assassination, political manipulation, anarchy and corruption on a global level."

"Oh my gosh!" gasped Matilda "How horrible!"

"Yes Matilda, this is an unspeakably horrific discovery of ours." muttered Conquering Storm "We are as horrified as you are princess. This clan dishonours Chun-Nan and plots to rule the whole world, taking away innocent freedom from innocent lives everywhere and forcing them against their wills to do their bidding and they will happily slaughter all who stand against them. We have tried desperately against this evil but their forces prove too powerful for even me to defeat."

She turned away from Matilda and sauntered over to a Raiju Clan flag that hung on the wall beside her throne. Her eyes narrowed down to evil, dark slits that made her look very dangerous and sinister.

"The Raiju Clan is destined to become Chun-Nan's mightiest defenders and greatest warriors and yet we are useless against this despicable group of warriors who seek to desecrate the world and reshape it to fit their image." she murmured "We must stop them before they make their next sinister move and take over the whole world. Those desecraters must not be allowed to commence with their horrific plots or freedom and honour everywhere will cease to be forever."

Matilda was shocked to hear this terrible news from Conquering Storm and she wondered to herself about it. An evil force that was plotting to take over Mobius? They all knew kung-fu too and are too strong for the Raiju Clan to defeat? They were behind the aqua-collar thievery? This was all so sudden and so shocking to hear. Matilda couldn't believe what she had heard and she knew what had to be done about it. Rile Chun-Nan up against this evil and stop it before it can take over Chun-Nan. Matilda wandered up behind Conquering Storm.

"Conquering Storm, I've taken in your warnings and I've made a decision." said Matilda softly "I'm going to rile the country up against

this evil and I will help you and your clan defeat it. Master Gāng, Bladefeather, Mushu and all the other kung-fu masters will join us too and I'll see if my mentor will join us too."

"So do you swear on your soul and the souls of the emperor and his people you'll help us?" asked Conquering Storm, turning back around to face Matilda "Do you give your word of honour that you will assist the Raiju Clan in any means necessary to defeat this enemy?"

"I swear." said Matilda, crossing her heart with her finger "I give my word of honour that I'll help you stop this evil that threatens our peace and prosperity."

Conquering Storm smiled and she held her hand out for Matilda to shake. Matilda shook hands with her and Conquering Storm delivered one last sentence.

"The Raiju Clan thanks you for your cooperation and willingness to help us keep the world safe and free." said Conquering Storm with a dry smile on her face "Now, you may return home Matilda. Inform your father and then meditate upon what you have heard today. Formulate a plan as you meditate and then carry it out whenever you deem necessary. We shall do our best to keep this evil from making its move until it is time for us to strike."

"Yes Conquering Storm." said Matilda, bowing to Conquering Storm "I'm honoured to be joining up with you in your crusade. I will formulate a plan and once I've riled the country up, we shall make our move against this evil."

"Excellent." said Conquering Storm happily "As a token of my sincerity, the clan wishes for you to have this."

She handed Matilda a badge that carried the Raiju Clan's flag on it. Matilda looked at the badge, which was a sparkling gold and could be worn on any item of clothing.

"The Raiju Clan gives its allies that badge as a sign of honour and teamwork." explained Conquering Storm "Wear our badge and honour the clan by carrying it into battle as we fight this evil."

"I will." said Matilda honestly "Thank you for everything and I promise, I'll help in any means necessary to protect the world from this evil."

Conquering Storm said nothing more but she bowed to Matilda and wandered back over to her throne. Matilda bowed back and she walked out of the throne room. A ninja stood by the door and watched her go through the hall and out through the fortress entrance. Conquering Storm sat down on her throne again and spoke to the ninja at the door.

"Has she left yet?" asked Conquering Storm.

"She has my liege." said the ninja.

"Good." said Conquering Storm, now feeling safe to gloat to herself "What a success this plan is being so far. Matilda has fallen for our excellently contrived lie and has honour bound herself to our clan. She now works for us and she'll be forced to help us conquer Chun-Nan against her own will. After all, you cannot go back on your word of honour since one's word of honour is sacred. Matilda will rile the country up against a nonexistent enemy and then we shall kidnap her, inform her on the truth and then set out to conquer Chun-Nan. With Matilda on our side, we cannot possibly fail…"

With that said, Conquering Storm began to laugh evilly to herself. What a shock Matilda was going to get when she found out that she had been lied to and was now honour-bound to the Raiju Clan, meaning she had to serve them and fight for them instead of against them. With the main problem out of the way, the Raiju Clan had nothing to fear when it prepared to make it's move on the country…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 56**

****Wán means "finish" in Chinese**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 55**

Good grief! Matilda's just signed up for an evil plot to conquer Chun-Nan! Will she find out though and how will she worm her way out of the deal? Join me next time as the arc continues in Part 2...

A Few Steps To A Conquering Storm 2

Arc 14: A Few Steps To An Oncoming Storm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 113-115

Part 2: Next Step Is A Gale

Princess Matilda ran home as fast as her legs would let her. She had just visited the Bride of the Conquering Storm and her clan in their formidable fortress and had been told about an "evil force" that threatens to take over the world. This was all a lie as you already known and Matilda had just been duped into signing herself up for the Raiju Clan by giving her word of honour that she would help the clan defeat the enemy. But Matilda didn't know that, she believed all those lies since the Raiju Clan were allies of the kung-fu warriors of Chun-Nan and she was convinced that there was an evil force waiting in the shadows to come out and attack. As Matilda ran for home, several thoughts began buzzing through her mind.

Evil force. Plotting world conquest. All kung-fu warriors. she thought to herself *Could they be the ones that my nightmarish visions were on about? The vision showed a group of warriors in a ravaged Chun-Nan. It must be about this evil force that Conquering Storm's cryptically warned me about. Well as Master Kai told me, I'm not letting this vision unfold as foretold. I'm gonna prevent it from coming true! My vision will be among the many visions that NEVER come true!*

Matilda told this determinedly to herself as she continued to run through the plains of Chun-Nan and back to the village. She was not going to let her vision come true. She was going to do anything in her power to make sure her vision doesn't come true and nothing was going to prevent her from achieving this. As Matilda ran through the plains, she made it back to the village of Chun-Nan, still as beautiful and as happy as ever, and she began to weave through the crowd of people that were out and about in this village. The

villagers all stepped to the side, wondering what was up with Matilda and why she seemed to be in a hurry. Matilda narrowly avoided someone who was heading to a vase stall and the person shook her fist at her.

"Watch it you crazy woman!" snapped the shopper.

"Sorry!" Matilda called over to him, not caring about the fact the shopper had just called her crazy. It did take a lot to upset Matilda after all and simply calling her crazy was not going to get to her.

Matilda weaved around more shoppers and the shoppers all stared at her, flabbergasted at the running princess.

"Whatever has gotten the princess in such a hurry?" wondered one shopper who was a female goat with large horns.

"Maybe she's late for something." suggested another shopper, who was a snake with arms and green scales (Mobian snakes have arms).

"Must be." said the goat "The poor girl looks frantic right now, seeing her run through us all like this."

Matilda ran past another shopper, managing to avoid him perfectly, and she jumped past a couple of kids playing on the ground with one another. The kids stared at her in amazement and began wondering if they could leap like that. Matilda continued to run through the village but as she pelted past the stalls and shoppers around, she saw someone stepping in her way and she was too late to stop herself. She crashed into the person and the two fell down onto the ground in a heap. The person she'd crashed in to was none to happy with this and he instantly began ranting and raving at her.

"You stupid little canaille! Don't you know it's dangerous to run through the village like this when there are a high number of citizens out and about shopping for items they require?!" snarled the person.

"I'm sorry, I'm so, so sorry about all this!" cried Matilda "I'm in a rush and I really can't slow down right now, there's a crisis going on and…"

She stopped herself in mid-sentence as she picked herself up and realized that the person she'd crashed into was none other then her boyfriend Bladefeather the Falcon. He and his friend Mushu the Iguana were out in the market shopping for trinkets and Matilda had just crashed into him. This just made Matilda feel even worse now, she'd pelted through the village like a mad thing and she'd ended up crashing into Bladefeather. Bladefeather was quite surprised to see it was Matilda who had crashed into him and he began to feel hot under the collar for snapping at her like this. After all, you can't mistreat royalty or you'll face treason.

"Princess!" shrieked Bladefeather "Good heavens, please excuse my unneeded rant earlier! I had no idea it was you who bumped into me and knocked me over! I do beg your pardon Matilda!"

"Bladefeather, ease up, its alright." said Matilda, helping Bladefeather back up to his feet "I really shouldn't be running through the streets like this, even if I am in a hurry."

"This just brings upon a question I strive to find the answer to." said Bladefeather "Why ever are you in such a frenzied state anyway my blossom flower? Is there something of the horrific kind about to happen?"

"You bet there is!" cried Matilda, putting her hands on Bladefeather's shoulders "Conquering Storm's asked to see me and she's told me there's an evil force hoping to take over all of Mobius! She says it's a group of kung-fu warriors who live outside of Chun-Nan's borders and they're the ones behind the theft of the water panther's aqua collars!"

Bladefeather and Mushu both stared at each other in disbelief. This seemed so sudden to them. All was well and then suddenly there's an enemy hoping to strike and take over the world? Well their master had once taught them that enemies can strike at the most unexpected of moments so they shouldn't be too shocked at this. The two looked back over at Matilda.

"So Conquering Storm's apprised you on information about a vulgar, baneful group of kung-fu warriors who wish to take over Mobius itself?" mused Bladefeather "Just as Chun-Nan recuperates, some

evil force has to threaten its peace and prosperity."

"I know, it's horrible isn't it?" asked Matilda "Conquering Storm and her clan had tried to beat this enemy themselves but it's too powerful for them so she requires my help and I've decided to rile the country up against this evil so we will be an even bigger force to be reckoned with. Will you two help me and the Raiju Clan defeat this anonymous foe?"

Mushu nodded, instantly agreeing with this since he was a man of good nature and believed in helping people no matter the situation.

"I whole-heartedly agree to abet you and the Raiju Clan." said Bladefeather "We all know my abhorrence for evil is greater then my abhorrence for anything else I detest. I will help you defeat this group of unrighteous fiends who dare to misuse the gift of kung-fu much like Zira the Ruthless did. So what do you know about this enemy now Conquering Storm's told you about them?"

"Well all she knows is what they are, what they wish to do and that they've never been seen in action until now." said Matilda.

"So it's a group of kung-fu warriors who have been heavily abeyant until now?" mused Bladefeather "Clever tactics of them I must say. Hiding for a while and then striking at the moment they least expect it is always a good way of catching people off guard."

"It is." said Matilda "Anyway, I'm glad you two are willing to help stand against this oncoming threat. I can't begin to thank you enough for your loyalty to this country and its people."

"Your thanks is greatly appreciated." said Bladefeather with a warm smile on his beak, lightly stroking Matilda's cheek and looking into her eyes lovingly "Me and Mushu look forward to seeing you on the battlefield as we fight this evil that has been unseen until now."

Matilda nodded and she gave Bladefeather a quick kiss before running off to the Pagoda of Prosperity to tell Emperor Tai about what Conquering Storm had told her. Bladefeather and Mushu watched as Matilda left the village and headed off to the Pagoda of Prosperity. They then turned back to one another and Bladefeather

spoke to Mushu in a quiet tone of voice since he didn't want the citizens of the village to hear him and get in a panic.

"This enemy must be the master of sequestration if it's managed to remain unknown until now." whispered Bladefeather "We're going to have to be on our toes when we eventually fight this evil force that Conquering Storm's warned our princess about. Who knows what skills they have if they've managed to spend a long time in hindsight and remain anonymous for so long. No matter what skills they have though, I'm not willing to let them conquer Mobius and take away the freedom of everybody everywhere. How about you Mushu? Will you fight this crusade to the bitter end?"

Mushu nodded.

"I cannot begin to describe how appreciative I am of your cooperation in defending this country Mushu." said Bladefeather happily "So, shall we apprise our master on Matilda's cryptic bit of news?"

Mushu nodded again.

"I acquiesce with you on that." said Bladefeather "Master Gāng must know about this aberrant foe that threatens to strike at any moment."

With that said, Bladefeather and Mushu both walked off to inform their master, the steel-quill porcupine Master Gāng, about this enemy that Conquering Storm had warned Matilda about. Pity that the enemy didn't actually exist and all they were doing was preparing to fight an imaginary foe as well as falling for Conquering Storm's dastardly plan…

Meanwhile, Matilda had arrived home at last and she found her father sitting in the garden and meditating quite peacefully. He'd been doing this all the while Matilda had been with Conquering Storm and while he was a little disappointed his lovely meditation had just been interrupted, he was pleased to see Matilda back again. He got up to his feet and turned to face his daughter. Matilda instantly wrapped her arms around him and hugged him tightly. Tai

began to wonder what was up with Matilda as she doesn't usually squeeze him like this unless she's been away for a while but he returned the hug anyway.

"Hello again dearest." said Tai warmly "How did your meeting with Conquering Storm go then?"

"It wasn't a pleasant meeting daddy." said Matilda, breaking up the hug and staring directly into her father's eyes "Conquering Storm invited me over to her fortress because she wanted to warn me about something. She's discovered something truly terrible and wanted me to know about it more then anybody else because of how powerful I am."

"Really?" said Emperor Tai, looking a little nervous at what it was Conquering Storm had been telling her "What has Conquering Storm told you about then?"

"She's told me that there's an evil force that comprises of evil kung-fu warriors that live outside the borders of Chun-Nan." explained Matilda "They've been unseen in action until now and they're planning to take over the whole world. According to Conquering Storm, they rely on methods such as crime, assassination, political manipulation, anarchy and worldwide corruption and are going to use these methods to get what they want."

"They're not!" cried Emperor Tai in horror, unable to believe what he'd just heard "This is beyond evil what those warriors are plotting! Even more evil then that traitor Governor Shen and even Zira the Ruthless! This is dis-honouree on so many levels!"

"I know." said Matilda "I'm as horrified as you are dad. Apparently, they're the ones behind the thievery of the water panthers' aqua collars too and Hydra only stole all their collars because he'd been forced to! I can't believe anybody can possibly be so evil!"

"Neither can I my treasure." said Emperor Tai grimly, looking down at the pond and looking at his reflection "I always knew that the world was full of evil people but never in my life had I dreamed of anybody being as evil as this. I doubt even Dr. Eggman's evil compares to this evil force Conquering Storm knows about. How

does she know about this force since nobody else knows about them?"

"She had spies to find out about them." explained Matilda "Everything she knows came from them. She told me her clan's tried to defeat this evil force but the group's too powerful for her and the Raiju Clan. She's asked for me to help her and I've given my word of honour that I'll help her in anyway possible to defeat this enemy."

"Well done Matilda." said Tai proudly, a crusty smile spreading out on his aged face "That was the right choice for you to make. Even though I'll be concerned for your safety when this enemy strikes, I know your heart is in the right place and with you and the Raiju Clan together, you'll save the world from this enemy. If worse comes to worse, we can even ask Sonic and the Royal Fighters to help us as well."

"I'll call for them if we need them." said Matilda "In the meantime, I've got a plan that'll stop those guys dead in their tracks. I'm going to rile up the whole country against this enemy and I'm going to recruit Bladefeather, Mushu, Master Gāng and I'll even ask Kai Zen to join me and the Raiju Clan in this battle. With all of us united as one, this evil force can't possibly stop us."

"Indeed." said Emperor Tai gravely, his face falling into a serious expression "But would it be wise to tell everybody about this sudden news at a time of peace like this? We might panic them and the country will be in a frenzied state if we just spread mass panic through it."

"I'm sure I can get them all to understand." said Matilda "Especially my friend Li Moon and all the water panther clans out there. But I'm only going to rile the country up under your permission father. So do I have it?"

Emperor Tai thought for a moment. He wasn't too sure about riling up the country during a time of peace against an unknown enemy that had been in hiding for a while and was plotting to strike at any moment and take the world by force. But if they didn't prepare the country for the attack of this evil force then nobody would be ready for them and they'd be easy prey for the villains. As many people

have said in history "united we stand, divided we fall" and if all of Chun-Nan was united, this villain was sure to fall to them. Not even a group of kung-fu warriors can take on an entire country if it's all standing together to defend it. The best idea would be to let Matilda commence with her plan.

"Matilda, you may rile the country up against this threat." said Emperor Tai "But not right now. It'll be hard to convince everybody to get together and it'll be a tiring process if we go through the entire country to warn everybody. We will do it tomorrow though since we're due to give a speech regarding the current state of peace we're in. We can tell them about this oncoming threat there since most of the country will gather to hear us speak and since word travels fast around Chun-Nan, any who don't attend the speech will be informed as well."

"I think that's a great idea daddy." said Matilda "I just hope this anonymous foe doesn't strike anytime soon or we will not be prepared for them and we'll be easy prey for them. I'm glad Conquering Storm warned me about this threat so that I may stop it before it begins."

"Conquering Storm has been of wonderful assistance to us all my daughter." said Tai brightly "She helped us defeat Zira, helped you prevent Zira from escaping the Lóng de dòngxué and has now helped us prepare for an oncoming threat. I can't begin to thank her and her clan enough for their contribution to the safety of Chun-Nan and its people. She is truly an honourable woman."

"And her clan are an honourable clan." added Matilda "They have so much honour in them it's unbelievable. Next time I meet Conquering Storm, I'll make sure she gets my sincerest thanks for all this."

"As will I." said Emperor Tai, putting his arms around Matilda and hugging her lovingly and warmly.

Matilda returned the hug and the two mongooses rubbed cheeks with each other. Now Emperor Tai knew about Conquering Storm's warning, the royals of Chun-Nan could put their worries to the side and put Matilda's plan into action first thing tomorrow. But the true enemy they were going to be up against was the last person they'd

ever expect and it was the very person who gave Matilda the warning in the first place…

Over in Master Kai's secret underground lair where he resided for most of his days, Kai was sitting in the middle of his very wealthy and luxurious looking carpet and meditating to himself. Kai liked moments like this. He could drop his "vigilante kung-fu master" act since nobody would come around and see him during times like these and he could relax for a minute before teaching new students and helping them to become powerful kung-fu warriors. He only really had the whole "vigilante kung-fu master" act to fool his enemies and so if anyone betrayed him, they wouldn't be able to identify him since they only knew him as a man in a mask, they never saw what he looked like under the mask so if they were looking for him, he could easily take his mask off and no one would suspect him as being Master Kai. When he was on his own and didn't have to put on his act, he removed his mask and put his hood down. When not wearing the mask, you could see that Kai was a Mobian Badger with thick black eyebrows and a long beard with a black stripe on it. He had long drooping whiskers on the sides of his face. He also looked quite aged, suggesting he had been teaching for years (well when you consider he's been training Matilda since she was five and she's twenty-one now, that is a long time that's passed so he's obviously going to be old). Kai peacefully mediated in the middle of his lair and he hummed quietly to himself as he began to harness the flow of the universe and feel himself began to relax all over. But something was about to interrupt his meditation for he received a vision during the session. No matter how old you were or what level of kung-fu you were at, you could still receive visions of any kind at any time. Kai watched this vision unfold in his head and what he saw was quite unsettling to him. Unsettling to the point his eyes snapped open and his meditation ended. He remained sitting on the floor but he began to think to himself about the vision he'd just had.

"Not only is Matilda receiving apocalyptic visions, I am too." he said to himself "Mine is rather puzzling though. I was shown a familiar figure leading its troops into battle and the resulting invasion leaves

Chun-Nan conquered and ravaged. I have a sneaky feeling that treachery is in the air all of the sudden and we're all being deceived by someone."

He thought to himself about this whole vision. Maybe it was just a red herring like many visions he'd experienced before had been. But what if this one came true? And if it did come true then who was the traitor going to be? It was too early to be certain but Kai knew that he couldn't let this vision come true much like Matilda couldn't let her's come true. Coming to think of it, Matilda and Kai's visions seemed surprisingly smiliar, almost as if they were linked somehow. This was certainly coincidental…maybe too coincidental. If they were linked then what did the two visions represent and what were they both saying to Matilda and Kai?

"So many questions…" mused Kai Zen to himself, stroking his beard "Questions that may not need answering. While this vision is unsettling, I should not worry about it. It may just be trying to trick me. I learnt that lesson the hard way during the time I tutored a young boy and I received a vision that distracted me from my teachings and I fretted over nothing because it did not come true. Still, Matilda will need to know about this next time she sees me. I'll be sure to tell her about this and see what she thinks. Strange for me and Matilda's nightmarish visions to be almost linked in some way…"

As puzzling and coincidental all this was, Kai decided not to let it bother him. He went back into meditation mode and put the vision to the side. He thought about more important things like Matilda's last lessons needed to complete her training to the expert stage. He looked forward to making that achievement. He had never trained anybody to the expert stage before so Matilda would be his first student to reach this stage and he would truly be honoured to finally teach someone to that stage. And his teachings had been paying off so far since Matilda had been doing well defending the country and saving Chun-Nan from evil time after time. The next fight Matilda got into would definitely put her skills to the test though and Kai Zen could see that that day would soon be coming and not in a way anyone expected…

Later that day, just as noon was approaching, Matilda had gone back out into the village and she was at a local restaurant with her friend Li Moon. The two girls were having lunch together and Matilda felt like she and Li Moon had some catching up to do as they hadn't seen each other recently. As the girls sat down and waited to be served, they stirred up a conversation with each other.

"It's nice to see you again Li Moon." said Matilda "Especially as we haven't seen each other in a while."

"Same here Matilda." said Li Moon "You look great as always. I always wonder how you manage to keep your beauty; you always look great no matter how many times we see each other."

"In all honesty, I think my beauty's kinda over-exaggerated." said Matilda modestly "I don't see why everybody seems to think I'm so beautiful, I will admit I do look pretty but I don't think I'm THAT pretty. But everybody's entitled to their opinions after all so I'm not gonna be the one to say they're wrong for what they think about me."

"I agree with you Matilda." said Li Moon "Everybody has an idea on what's beautiful and what's not. So how's your kung-fu training coming on then?"

"It's coming on great Li Moon." said Matilda brightly "I'm almost at the expert stage of kung-fu. I just need to master inner peace and then I'm there. The problem is I can't subside my worries long enough to get there. According to my master, I can't seem to relax my mind along with my body." she said, her expression dropping into a solemn one "He says that "In order to achieve inner peace, you must relax your mind and your body simultaneously in order to achieve it". Given how much I have on my shoulders already, it's kind of hard for me to do this."

"I see what you mean." said Li Moon, pitying Matilda for her problems and wishing there was someway she could help "You're a princess after all and you have a lot of stuff on your plate. There's the villains of Chun-Nan you have to be on the alert for as they strike at the most unexpected of moments and the pressures of the royal life. I always wonder how the emperors and empresses Chun-Nan's

had over history manage to cope with all this. It must be stressful ruling a country."

"Not when the country loves you and has utmost faith in you as not only a ruler but a person too." noted Matilda "Dad always says to me that the one thing that helps him deal with the pressures of royal life is the love of the people and that the love of the people is what keeps him going strong and helps him to have a clear mind when doing his duty. I just hope I can live up to that kind of image when my time on the throne comes."

"I'm sure you will Matilda." said Li Moon with a heavy supportive tone in her voice "You're a wonderful person and you have the heart of a lion. You opted to learn a sport you hated just so that you may defend the country and your father from the evil that threatens Chun-Nan's sanctuary whenever it strikes. Any normal person wouldn't bother to learn kung-fu full stop but you cared more about the people and your father then yourself and you spent all these years just learning kung-fu so that you may have the strength and power to defend the country. That kind of selflessness is going to be hard to top Matilda."

Matilda was really touched by Li Moon's statement. It was no wonder Li Moon was friends with her, she knew how to make her feel good even when in stressful moments like these. Matilda couldn't ask for a better friend.

"Oh Li Moon, you're such a good friend." said Matilda "I'm touched by your statement. I really don't know what to say about this."

"Well Matilda I'm only saying what's true." said Li Moon with a heavy tone of honesty in her voice "You are a wonderful person and I'm glad that me and you are friends. There's no person in the world who could be a better friend then you."

Matilda just beamed with pride. She really wasn't sure what it was that made her so beloved among the people but she was glad she was much loved; it gave her a lot of faith and gave her high hopes for the future when she takes over from her father and rules in his stead. Before Matilda and Li Moon could carry on their conversation, the waiter, who was a red panda, to the restaurant they were at

arrived at their table and he handed out the menus.

"Here are the menus my wonderful ladies." he said politely as he handed them to Matilda and Li Moon "I'll be back to take your order in a minute."

"OK, thank you." said Matilda politely.

The waiter walked away and went over to another table to take another customer's order. Matilda and Li Moon looked at the menus and wondered on what to have. The menu had a lot of appetizing choices available.

"Mmm…I like the sound of the Chow-Mien Super Noodle Supreme." said Matilda as she looked at one of the options available on the menu "It says here that it's a Chow-Mien with a big helping of noodles and lots of soy sauce."

"I quite fancy a Chun-Nan Tofu myself." said Li Moon "I love a good tofu so I think I'll order that."

"I don't blame you Li Moon, tofu's are very good, especially when Chun-Nan makes them." said Matilda, closing the menu and putting it down on the table "We know what we want now so we'll just wait for the waiter to serve us."

Li Moon put down her menu and the girls waited to be served. While they waited, Li Moon decided to ask Matilda something else.

"So, what else have you been doing today?" asked Li Moon "Anything good?"

Matilda's face fell at that question. She didn't really want to bring up her meeting with Conquering Storm to Li Moon right now since she was supposed to keep this news under warps until the emperor's public speech tomorrow. But if she could tell Bladefeather and Mushu about this then there was no harm in Li Moon, her best friend, learning about all this. Matilda sighed a little and prepared to speak.

"I was invited to the Raiju Clan's fortress to see their leader, the Bride of the Conquering Storm earlier today." she began.

"Really?" cooed Li Moon "I bet that was an interesting visit wasn't it? Being invited to see the Raiju Clan's leader, Conquering Storm. So what did they want you for then?"

"They wanted to talk to me about something bad they've discovered." explained Matilda "They've discovered that…"

Before she could carry on this discussion, an arrow suddenly appeared from nowhere and embedded itself into the ground just next to Matilda and Li Moon's table, making the two girls jump in surprise. The waiter had heard the arrow too and he turned around to see what was going on.

"Jumping wontons, what was that?!" he cried.

Matilda and Li Moon jumped up from their seats and Matilda yanked the arrow out of the ground. The arrow had a piece of paper tied to it.

"Ninjas no doubt." she muttered "They deliver messages this way. That's two arrows have had today, what message does this arrow have for me?"

Matilda unwrapped the paper from the arrow and she read it aloud.

"I am some one you know princess and I have urgent matters to discuss with you. Meet me in the Great Plains and I shall tell you everything." she read.

"Who's it from Matilda?" asked Li Moon.

"I don't know." said Matilda, crumpling the note "It's not signed by anyone. But the note claims it's someone I know. Maybe it is or maybe it's someone playing tricks on me. Either way, I'm going to see this person and find out what he wants. I hope it's not MORE bad news."

"Matilda, don't you think the person who sent that note might be leading you into a trap?" asked Li Moon "I mean the person didn't sign his name, doesn't that sound a little suspicious."

"If it is a trap then it won't work on me since I'm one of Chun-Nan's

most powerful warriors and no villain currently around can surpass my battle prowess." said Matilda "It'll be a trap that's doomed for failure."

"If you're sure on that…" said Li Moon uncertainly.

"I'll be OK Li Moon, please don't fret over me." said Matilda "I'll be back as soon as possible. See you later."

"See you later." said Li Moon "And please be careful."

"I will." said Matilda reassuringly.

Matilda then proceeded to run off at an incredible speed and she ran through the village of Chun-Nan and off to the Great Plains to see who this mystery letter-sender was and what it wants to see her for. Li Moon just watched Matilda run away, wondering if Matilda was being foolish for agreeing to the letter she'd just received. But given her skills and strength, Matilda would easily get out of any scrape she might end up getting into so there was nothing to worry about…

A few minutes later, Matilda arrived at the Great Plains and she looked around only to see that there didn't seem to be anyone there. The plains were as plain and empty as they usually were. The only sign of life around at this moment was Matilda. Something was definitely off here. If someone wanted to meet Matilda here then why was there no one around? Maybe the whole thing had been a trick after all.

"Hello?" Matilda called out "Is there anyone here? I thought someone wanted to see me out here. Where are you? Hello?"

She received no answer. The plains were devoid of any life around and Matilda was the only one here. Matilda began fuming to herself. The note had been a trick and she'd fallen for it. How embarrassing that would have been if anyone had seen this.

"For goodness sake, it's bad enough I'm constantly having nightmares and I've got something to worry about, I can do without being pranked!" she grumbled "And whoever it is really needs to

learn about maturity or they will be in trouble one of these days. Playing tricks on people is not the proper way to behave after all."

But Matilda was about to realize that she was not alone in the plains after all and had been invited into a trap by an old enemy of hers. Some shadowy figures poked their heads out from behind a giant rock and they watched Matilda with cold, icy glares. These figures were members of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan! The shadowy cat ninjas glared at Matilda and they watched as she walked away through the plain to head back to the village. To their luck, Matilda walked past the rock they were hiding behind, giving them the perfect moment to strike. The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas all drew out long chains with maces attached to them and they twirled them around. They then threw the chains at Matilda and the chains wrapped themselves around Matilda's body, the maces helping with that and the weight of them bringing Matilda down to the ground. Matilda stared in horror at the maces and chains that had suddenly wrapped themselves around her. Her arms were firmly fixed to her sides thanks to the chains being wrapped around her. She was all trussed up and because her arms were stuck to her sides, she couldn't break free of the chains. To make things worse, one ninja managed to move Matilda's hands behind her back and they snapped a pair of shackles on them, making an escaped from this predicament even more impossible. Matilda was now completely wrapped up in chains, her hands shackled behind her back and the weight of the maces on the chains pulled her down so she couldn't even stand up. Matilda struggled in the chains but try as she might, she had no way of getting out of this one, even if she was all powerful and almost a kung-fu expert. Even a kung-fu expert would have a tough time getting out of this. One ninja walked up behind Matilda and he tied a piece of cloth around her mouth, gagging her and making her unable to scream for help (not that it'd do her much good since she's in the middle of flipping nowhere!). Matilda struggled and writhed around, making muffled noises as she did so, desperately trying to break free of her chains. But her attempts were futile. This trap she'd gotten caught in was just too tough even for her. The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas instantly began crowing at her.

"Ha, ha, ha! We've got you pretty princess!" they sneered "I can't believe you fell for our obvious trap!"

"Maybe she replaced her brain with more muscle during her training and is now completely thick!" laughed another ninja.

The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas all burst out laughing at that little joke, making Matilda fume in annoyance. The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas then suddenly stopped laughing and they stood to attention as their leader Fong Zarr came out from behind the rock, a katana in his hand and he twirled it around in excellent fashion. Matilda's eyes widened and she tried to scream Fong Zarr's name aloud but the gag stopped her from doing so. Fong Zarr stood before Matilda and he pointed his katana directly at her face.

"Hello doll face." he purred dryly.

Matilda grumbled and tried to say "Don't call me doll face!" but the gag stopped her and all you could hear from her was mumbles and muffled shouting. Fong Zarr chuckled at her.

"I'm sorry what was that?" he sneered "Mblemblemble! That's a verrry interesting language you're speaking Matilda, what is it? Some language I haven't heard before?"

Matilda was so furious right now her face turned red with anger and she began to mumble from behind her gag. I'm pretty sure you could also see steam coming out of her ears too. Fong Zarr decided to drop the snarky attitude and he kept the katana pointed at Matilda's face.

"Well Matilda, you have fallen for our little trap." gloated Fong Zarr "I was the one who sent you that message at the restaurant and I have a hard time believing you were stupid enough to have fallen for it. I always said women were dumb and you've just proven me right Matilda."

If Matilda wasn't chained up right now, you can be sure she would be giving Fong Zarr a good thrashing for that sexist remark of his. But she was powerless to do anything to the Yīnyǐng Mao clan leader so she remained kneeling before him and bearing his insults. Fong Zarr continued crowing at the captured princess.

"So Matilda, I guess you're wondering why we're doing this." said

Fong Zarr "So I'll tell you, after I managed to escape the Lóng de dòngxué, I plotted to have you killed since you're too big a thrrreat for the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and I can't let you live otherwise we'll never succeed in any of our plans. So we've decided to trick you into coming out here were NO ONE is around and NO ONE will see you die. When we get rid of you, it'll seem like you've just vanished frrrom the face of Chun-Nan."

Matilda gasped from behind her gag and she stared at Fong Zarr in horror. This whole thing was an assassination attempt?! The Yīnyǐng Mao clan wanted to kill her?! She had to get out of this and fast before she was killed but given her current status, that didn't seem likely. Fong Zarr tapped the side of Matilda's neck with the katana.

"Such a shame I'll have to cut off such a beautiful head." he said "Oh well, it'll make a fine display back at our temple. Now Matilda, say your prayers for you will be united with your ancestors!"

He raised the katana above his head and prepared to cleave Matilda's head clean off her body. Matilda closed her eyes and waited for the killer blow. But it never came for something appeared from nowhere and shot a strand of web at Fong Zarr. The web wrapped itself around Fong Zarr's body and the clan leader was brought down to the ground. The Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas were horrified but before they could prepare themselves, they ended up getting wrapped in web too. Matilda was surprised to see all this but she knew that this wasn't a blessing that was happening, it was things getting worse. For the Spiders of Anarchy had come out to play. Gina the Spider Queen and her husband Dak had heard all the commotion and to their delight, they saw Matilda and the whole Yīnyǐng Mao clan out in the open just ready for them to catch. And now the two spiders had webbed up the entire clan and left them completely powerless and helpless before them. Matilda gathered that she was next and she couldn't do anything about it since she was chained up still. Gina scuttled over to Matilda and she chuckled a dry, evil chuckle at her.

"What serendipity." she said "I've just captured the notorious Yīnyǐng Mao clan AND the Princess of Chun-Nan. You will make fine additions to the dinner table, all of you. My children will be very

happy to sink their fangs into all of you."

Matilda tried to scream but the gag stopped her from doing so and she tried to run away by the maces were too heavy and she could barely get up. Gina raised one of her arms and she sliced Matilda's chains and shackles to pieces, freeing her but not for long. Immediately afterwards, she and Dak webbed up Matilda in a matter of seconds and now the poor princess was trussed up in web and waiting to become a spider's dinner. She wasn't gagged so she could speak at last.

"Gina! Spider Queen of the Spiders of Anarchy!" she whimpered "I didn't think our paths would ever cross again!"

"Neither did I sweetheart." purred Gina "I remember the last time we met. It was about ten years ago today when you were only eleven. Dak tried to eat you alive when we tried to replace the government before we were exiled. You were saved by Master Gāng. Well no one's around to save you now so Dak will get to do what he failed to do ten years ago."

"No! Please! Don't eat me or the Yīnyǐng Mao clan!" begged Matilda "Please, let us go!"

"I don't think that'll be happening Matilda." purred Gina "I'm a starving mother with lots of starving children and I have something for them to eat so I'm not going to let you go. Dak, gather up all those ninjas."

"Yes my dear." said Dak "May I have the honour of eating the princess?"

"You may handsome." said Gina, picking Matilda up and draping her on her back "You tried to eat her ten years ago so you may eat her now."

"No! No! Please! Don't do this spiders! Please, leave us alone!" cried Matilda.

The spiders ignored her and they began to carry the Yīnyǐng Mao clan and Matilda back to the spider caves. It appeared that Matilda

was finally going to meet her end, and a very grisly one at that for the spiders were now going to have her and the Yīnyǐng Mao clan for dinner. There was no one around so no one could save her from this…or couldn't they? Unbeknownst to anyone,

Dàfēng Rai was watching the whole scenario from up above the spider caves. He had been sent by Conquering Storm to see what was going on with Matilda and to his horror, she had just been captured by the Spiders of Anarchy.

"No! The princess has been captured!" he cursed to himself "We cannot lose her just after we've tricked her into honour-binding herself to us for our plan! We must save her! I'll get Conquering Storm and the others immediately!"

Dàfēng Rai then ran off to get the rest of the Raiju Clan and rile them up for a rescue operation. Matilda was going to be their trump card in their plan and they cannot afford to lose her so they had to rescue her or risk losing their secret weapon to a bunch of anarchistic spiders…

Well things just got worse didn't it? Matilda's about to become lunch for a bunch of spiders! Well the Raiju Clan save her in time or is Matilda's time up? Tune into Part 3 as things get more intense...

Yes, this part is dull and boring but trust me, the arc will get more interesting as we get to the last two parts.

A Few Steps To A Conquering Storm 3

Arc 14: A Few Steps To An Oncoming Storm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 113-115

Part 3: Third Step Whips Up A Storm

The Raiju Fortress was still as active as it had been earlier this morning. The Raiju ninjas were still training with one another and Conquering Storm was watching over them with her stern, watchful, icy orange eyes. Ever since the discussion with Matilda earlier, Conquering Storm had been feeling delighted with herself and all the Raiju ninjas seemed to share her delight for their training was getting better and better as the seconds went by. Conquering Storm watched as her loyal ninjas practiced their best moves on each other and she smiled to herself.

A ninja bride couldn't ask for a better clan of ninjas. she thought to herself *The Raiju Clan is mighty and powerful and it shows in my fine warriors. When we finally make our move against Chun-Nan, the country will swear fealty to us and we shall get what is rightfully ours, conquest and power. My masters before me stated that this was the clan's destiny and I will honour that to no end.*

Her head began to fill with images of her and the Raiju Clan standing tall over a battle-ravaged Chun-Nan and waving their flag as a sign of conquest and superiority. How she longed to see all this come true and with Matilda unwillingly on their side thanks to a word of honour, she would have to serve the Raiju Clan whether she liked it or not. How torn the emperor would be to see his precious daughter causing malice and mayhem along with the Raiju Clan. Conquering Storm could just see his face now. She was suddenly distracted from her thoughts when she noticed one of her ninjas performing an impervious sweep manoeuvre. The ninja spun around a perfect 360, sweeping the floor with his foot and tripping up his opponent. The other ninja fell over and before he could land on the

floor, the first ninja kicked him backwards and he landed just inches in front of the wall. The second ninja groaned in pain and he rubbed himself tenderly. That attack had been pretty hard and he could certainly feel the pain from that. Conquering Storm was well surprised at that. That attack was the Sweep Kick Attack, a very difficult attack to learn and only ninjas could learn that one (you learn different attacks depending on the martial arts you're following). Conquering Storm clapped at the ninja that had performed the impressive attack. She had been trying for years to get her ninjas to learn that move and one of them had finally done so. The Raiju Clan was definitely improving by the second. Now one ninja had learned the Sweep Kick Attack, the rest were soon to join him.

"Very well done Ye Wong." said Conquering Storm with a blunt expression and a dry smile on her face "You've finally perfected the Sweep Kick Attack. You honour the clan with your progress today."

"Thank you honoured matron." said Ye Wong, bowing to Conquering Storm "I'm glad I've pleased you."

"Let us hope you put that attack to good use when we take over Chun-Nan." said Conquering Storm coldly "Or there will be severe punishment should you fail."

"I won't fail my bride." said Ye Wong "I will use the attack to great effect in battle, that I promise you."

"Good." said Conquering Storm "Now let's see if the other ninjas can match your example."

Ye Wong nodded and he wandered over to the far side the room to help up his opponent so he may continue his training. But the Raiju Clan's training session was about to be halted for Conquering Storm's best ninja, Dàfēng Rai, burst into the room and he ran up to Conquering Storm. He looked deathly frantic and that something terrible had just happened. Conquering Storm told her ninjas to cease their training for the moment and she glowered at Rai, her arms behind her back and her gaze cold and deathly.

"Dàfēng Rai! You'd better have a reasonable excuse for bursting in

so suddenly and interrupting the Raiju Clan's training!" snarled Conquering Storm "If I recall, you're supposed to be keeping an eye on Matilda right now!"

"I was honoured matron." said Rai with a quick bow "And that's why I've come back here. I have grave news."

"Please do not tell me Matilda's becoming suspicious about us all of the sudden." muttered Conquering Storm "Or worse, spotted you and questioned you on what you were doing!"

"None of that has happened Conquering Storm!" blurted Rai "Matilda has been captured by the Spiders of Anarchy and they're going to feast on her!"

"What?!" cried Conquering Storm angrily "How dare they! Those insolent little pests have managed to capture the princess?! How is that even remotely possible?! Spiders don't know martial arts of any kind and Matilda's at Zira's level of kung-fu! How did they manage to capture a warrior as powerful as her?!"

"I think the Yīnyǐng Mao clan had something to do with it." suggested Rai "They were captured too."

"Well they deserve to be a spider's dinner but Matilda is our secret weapon in this conquest plan of ours!" grumbled Conquering Storm "She'll be the one to make the warriors hesitate in battle and strength like hers will be beneficial to a ninja clan such as us! We MUST rescue her before those damn spiders eat her alive! I am not losing the princess to a bunch of anarchistic spiders just as our plan's coming together after years of plotting! Raiju Clan, come on! We have got our secret weapon to save!"

"Yes Conquering Storm!" said the Raiju Ninjas in unison.

With that said, the whole Raiju Clan ran out of the fortress and they headed off to the Great Plains so that they may storm the SpiderCaves and rescue Matilda before she ends up being lunch for the Spiders of Anarchy…

Over at the spider caves, Princess Matilda and the whole Yīnyǐng Mao clan had been taken into them by the Spiders of Anarchy and they were all webbed up to the ceiling of the caves. The spider caves now had Matilda and the whole Yīnyǐng Mao clan dangling upside down from it and completely trussed up in web. It made Gina the Spider Queen swell with pride seeing so many victims in the grasp of the spiders and all ready for the feast. This was quite easily the biggest catch the Spiders of Anarchy had gotten in a while. There was enough for her, Dak and their hundreds of children (they're spiders, of course they have lots of children!) to eat easily. Matilda and Fong Zarr both began struggling in the grasp of the web they were wrapped up in but try as they might, they couldn't get free. Web is one of the hardest substances to get out of given how thick and sticky it is and even the greatest kung-fu masters couldn't get out of web. Matilda writhed around, making loud grunting noises as she did so.

"Heeeeeyugh! Gyugh! Urgh! Nuuuggghhh! Hurgh! Ugh!" she moaned and then started panting with effort "Grrrrr! Why can't I get out of this stupid web?! Ugh!" she whined, trying to spread her arms out but failing to do so thanks to the web.

"Because web is strong, sticky stuff and it's almost impossible to get out of you stupid woman!" snapped Fong Zarr "Oooooh, how I wish I didn't get caught up in this mess!"

"Well Fong Zarr, if you didn't decide to carry out this assassination plan to kill me and eliminate any resistance you might encounter then this wouldn't have happened!" retorted Matilda "This is all your fault this is Fong Zarr!"

"How is it my fault?!" demanded Fong Zarr.

"You and your clan hid out in the plains, you tricked me into coming here so you may kill me!" noted Matilda "Your clan caught the attention of the spiders and tempted them to come out so that they can get us so there, it is your fault you idiot ninja!"

"How dare you insult my honour like this Matilda!" fumed Fong Zarr "Once I get out of this web, I will slice you to rrrribbons!"

"As if!" scoffed Matilda "You were never a match for me Fong Zarr, I could floor you in seconds Fong Zarr!"

Fong Zarr growled in fury at the royal mongoose. How he longed to have that princess's head on a stick! But given his current predicament, that was not going to happen anytime soon. Gina and Dak were standing by and they appeared to be having great enjoyment in watching Matilda and Fong Zarr bicker like a pair of schoolchildren while hanging upside down from the ceiling. They liked to see how their victims acted before they became their dinner.

"Such inane squabbling." spat Dak "Do these ingrates have any idea that they're soon to become our feast? One would think they'd be trembling with fear instead of quarrelling like this."

"Oh well Dak, it's somewhat amusing watching them bicker hopelessly between each other." purred Gina darkly "Well I think we've stood by long enough, it's time to feed. Oh children! It's time to come out and feast!" she cooed over to a crevasse in the wall.

The darkness of the crevasse lit up with hundreds of little yellow dots. They were all spider eyes and the spider babies all crawled out from the crevasse and into the open. They looked up at the ceiling and they all stared in surprise at what was on offer. A whole clan of ninjas and the princess of Chun-Nan herself, all dangling upside down from the ceiling and wrapped up in web! What a feast that would be for the ravenously hungry baby spiders! The spider babies began to squeal in delight and they began jumping up excitedly. How desperate they were to get at the food. Matilda screwed her face up in disgust at the sight of the spider babies. Their little legs and their dripping fangs truly disgusted her. She'd never been that keen on spiders and seeing hundreds of them all at once just made her skin crawl.

"Eeeewwww! Ugh god, they're hideous!" she winced "I can't stand the sight of so many spiders!"

"I am going to be patient enough to overlook your insults Matilda." sneered Gina "For we've been insulted by you people so many times, we don't care anymore."

"Besides, our children are precious! How dare you imply that they're repulsive in appearance!" growled Dak "If you keep this up, we'll eat YOU first!"

"You don't have to do this to us!" shrieked Matilda "You don't have to keep snatching people out of the plains and eating them at any available opportunity!"

"And why not?" asked Gina crossly, scowling at her.

"There's nothing for us to eat in these plains!" snapped Dak "We must catch what we can or we'll all starve! And it's thanks to you and your selfish emperor that we're in this predicament in the first place!"

"How can you dare say my dad's selfish when you freaks are no better?!" retorted Matilda crossly "My dad did the right thing! Exiling you was the right thing to do! You tried to eat us all alive and replace our government and the most fitting punishment for you all was exile! So don't you dare belittle my dad when you're all in the wrong and not him!"

"Do you wanna know WHY we did those things ten years ago?" snarled Gina with a vicious scowl on her face "Because all we wanted was a spider to represent us all in the Chun-Nan government! The government doesn't benefit us in anyway and they overlooked us as mere scavengers and beasts! We would have put up with that if they'd had enough care in their hearts for us and allowed a spider to join the government to represent us and make sure that we're well looked after. But you all detested us and turned down our requests! We wanted one simple thing and you dismissed us! So we HAD to resort to anarchism in order to get what we wanted! You could have avoided all this if you just let at least one spider join the government!"

"Gina, while you may have had good intentions, the ends do not justify the means here." said Matilda softly "You can't just demand we have a spider join the government. None of you spiders have had a history in politics. If you wanted to join the government then you need to have skills in politics and democracy. The job of the government is to run the country and if we have an inexperienced member on the government then the government won't function as

perfectly as it should. As my dad once said "The machine will only function if all the cogs fit together". I'm sorry that we haven't met your needs Gina but we have valid reasons for turning you down. However if you come back to Chun-Nan and apologize for what you've done then maybe we'll lift your exile order and if you can give us a spider who knows how the government works and can provide a great example of how to run a country then we'll accept your offer and let a spider join the government. All you have to do is let me go and reform yourselves on your word of honour and then maybe Chun-Nan will be willing to welcome you back."

Gina took in all of Matilda's words and she was not buying any of it. She had decided that she can only trust a spider and she was not willing to listen to the princess of Chun-Nan, especially as she's the daughter of the very person who exiled them to these caves.

"Do you seriously believe I'm going to buy your lies for a minute?" she growled "If I let you go, you'll just squeal on us and get your father to order a mass slaughter of us all! And even if we did reform ourselves, the government will still ignore our requests and refuse to take us in! Even if any of us has skills in politics and governing! I decline your request Matilda and you're still on our menu!"

"Gina please, listen to me!" screamed Matilda "I'm trying to compromise so that all of us can live peacefully together instead of us being hateful towards the other! I'm not lying to you, I'm being honest here! If you release me and reform yourselves, everybody will forgive you and they'll let you back into the village! If you give your word of honour, they'll believe you easily!"

"We spiders do not believe in this "word of honour" nonsense!" snapped Dak "You cannot just say "I give you my word of honour" and expect everything to suddenly be alright after that! As sacred as it maybe, we do not believe in that tradition!"

"Well then you're all dis-honouree beings then if you do not believe in "word of honour"!" cried Matilda.

"You know what Matilda, just shut up will you?!" shouted Fong Zarr "All you're doing is ticking these savages off! Stop lambasting them alrrrready! All you're doing is digging us all into an even deeper

hole!"

"You shut up Fong Zarr!" yelled Matilda "This has nothing to do with you!"

"Enough!" bellowed Dak "Gina, I cannot take this irksome quarrelling any longer! Can we stop keeping the children waiting and just begin the feed already?!"

"Yes my dear husband." muttered Gina "I've had enough of all this pontificating from Matilda and this bickering from the Yīnyǐng Mao clan. It's time to let us feed."

Gina crawled up a wall and she skittered over to the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas that were all hanging upside down by the web they were wrapped in. With a quick swipe of her scythe hands, the ninjas and Fong Zarr all fell down to the ground with a heavy thud and the babies charged over to them. The spider babies all crawled over the ninja cats and they began to devour them all in an instant. Fong Zarr watched helplessly as his minions were stripped off their flesh by the spider babies. The caves filled with their blood-curdling screams as they tucked into them. Gina then stood over Fong Zarr and licked her lips.

"I think I'll have you all to myself." she purred eerily.

Gina then reached down and began devouring Fong Zarr bit by bit. Matilda closed her eyes and cringed as she heard the Yīnyǐng Mao ninjas crying in agony and the chomping of the spiders' teeth as they ate away at their victims. While this was all good for her since the Yīnyǐng Mao clan will never be a problem again, she didn't want this to happen to them. She wanted the Yīnyǐng Mao clan to be locked up in the Lóng de dòngxué prison so they can serve time for their crimes. And now they were being eaten, they would never pay for what they've done to Chun-Nan. The Spiders of Anarchy had just helped the Yīnyǐng Mao clan get out of their punishment the easy way. At least they could never harm anyone ever again. A few moments later, Gina and the spider babies had finally finished devouring the Yīnyǐng Mao clan. All that was left of them was their skeletons, the web that they were wrapped up in and their torn clothes that now littered the ground of the caves. The spider babies

were all satisfied with this feast of theirs and they squeaked happily amongst each other. That was the first decent meal they'd EVER had in all their lives so far. Gina licked her lips clean and she looked up at Matilda, who opened her eyes and looked back over at the spiders.

"Well Matilda, I gather that was satisfying for you since you're enemies with the Yīnyǐng Mao clan." said Gina dryly "At least they'll never be a problem for you again."

"That was not satisfying at all!" yelled Matilda "What do you think I am?! A monster like you lot are?! I may hate the Yīnyǐng Mao clan but I didn't wish doom on them like this! I only wanted them to get arrested and serve their penance! Now you've just saved them from all that! Besides, that was the most horrible thing I've ever witnesses, I can't believe how monstrous you spiders are!"

"Monstrous is only a point of view sweetheart." said Gina coldly "To us spiders, that's "natural". That's how we always eat our prey whether you like it or not. It's our way of life and you can't change that. Now, it's time that Dak got his dinner now. Dak, you may eat Matilda now."

"Thank you my queen." said Dak with a bow "I look forward to this." he added with a slimy grin on his face.

Matilda's heart began to beat so hard against her ribcage she thought it would break through it. This was it for her. She was going to become a spider's dinner and there was no one around to save her! She was dead! She was finished! How horrified Emperor Tai, Bladefeather, Mushu and even Conquering Storm would be when they found out that she'd got eaten by the Spiders of Anarchy. Who would have guessed this was going to be the fate of Chun-Nan's first ever kung-fu princess? Dak crawled up the wall and onto the ceiling. He raised his scythe hands up above his head and he sliced the web strand holding Matilda to the ceiling in two. Matilda dropped down to the ground and she lay on her side, wincing in pain. She was going to be in more pain in a minute though. Dak crawled back down to the ground and he stood over the webbed up princess, hissing gleefully. Matilda whimpered at him and she writhed about helplessly.

"Oh please, I beg of you spiders! Spare my life!" pleaded Matilda "Please, leave me alone! Have pity!"

"Why should we? You never did!" snapped Dak.

He then reared up and screeched a horrible, shrilling, spider screech that pierced Matilda's ears and made her cringe. She couldn't cover her ears for her arms were stuck to the sides of her body by the web. Dak then lowered back down to Matilda and he growled softly at her.

"Now, your hide is mine…princess." he hissed.

"No! No! Please, No! Don't do it! I beg of you! Don't do it!" screamed Matilda desperately.

But Dak was having none of it. He raised his arm above his head and aimed for Matilda's chest. He was going to kill her first and then eat her so that she can't attempt to escape after he unwraps her from the web. They had learned from that mistake of theirs when they tried to eat Sonic the time they caught him*. Sonic had evaded them because they made the mistake of unwrapping him from the web before killing him. Matilda whimpered and she looked away, closing her eyes and preparing for the killer blow. There was no escaping now, Dak was about to kill her and then she was going to be eaten. Dak crooned evilly at the terrified princess before him and he brought his scythe hand swinging down towards Matilda. But he never got to strike. Before Dak could stab Matilda, something leaped into the caves and pile-dived the giant spider in the gut, sending him hurling backwards and crashing against the wall. The spider babies all squealed in fright and they began scurrying around in fright. Gina stared at Dak and wondered who did this to her darling husband. She soon found out for standing in front of the webbed up Princess Matilda was none other then Conquering Storm herself! Matilda opened her eyes and realized that she was still alive and Conquering Storm stood before her. Conquering Storm looked over at Matilda and she grinned at him.

"Conquering Storm!" cried Matilda happily "Oh thank the ancestors! I'm so glad to see you!"

"I very much appreciate the comments Matilda." said Conquering Storm "The Raiju Clan had heard about you capture and we knew we couldn't allow these savages to devour our honouree princess could we?"

"How did you hear about my capture?" asked Matilda.

"Dàfēng Rai came across the Great Plains and he witnessed you being captured." explained Conquering Storm "He then came back to warn me first at hand and now the Raiju Clan has come to rescue you from these freaks of nature. Speaking of which, how did a warrior as powerful as you manage to get subdued by mere spiders?"

"The Yīnyǐng Mao clan tricked me into coming out here." muttered Matilda "They planned to kill me but they'd picked a bad place to carry out their plan for they ended up getting captured by the spiders too. They'd chained me up before that though so I couldn't get away from the spiders and they webbed me up after getting rid of my chains so I couldn't escape them."

"So that dis-honouree clan of ninjas, the Yīnyǐng Mao clan, are to blame for this then?" said Conquering Storm coldly "Well, the Raiju Clan will make sure they pay most beautifully for this…"

"No need to, they've been eaten." said Matilda, motioning over to the skeletons and clothes bits "Just like I was about to be before you came in."

Conquering Storm surveyed the scene before her and noticed all the skeletons and clothes bits that littered the ground.

"So they have." said Conquering Storm bluntly "Well they deserved that for what they've done in the past. Now then, it's time we got you out of here."

She reached behind her and pulled out a wealthy looking katana from a scabbard she was carrying on her back. She raised the sword above her head and gave Matilda's web a nice clean swish of the blade. The katana sliced the web clean open, freeing Matilda and allowing her to stand up and move again. Matilda leaped up

onto her feet and she flexed her limbs.

"Thank you Conquering Storm." said Matilda "I don't know how I can ever repay you for your kind actions today."

"Don't mention it." said Conquering Storm flatly "Now remove yourself from the caves. You detest violence so you will not want to watch this."

Matilda nodded and she ran for it as fast as she could go. Gina tried to stop her by spinning a web to catch her before she could leave but Conquering Storm sliced the spinning web in two with her katana. She then leaped onto Gina's abdomen and she plunged the katana into it, making Gina squeal in pain and writhe about madly. Conquering Storm leaped off of Gina's abdomen, her katana drenched with green blood (Mobian spiders have green blood) and Gina moaned in pain.

"Gyah! That hurt!" she growled "I won't be able to spin a web for weeks now! I will eat you alive for this!"

"You have a death wish if you think you can stop the all mighty Bride of the Conquering Storm spiders!" yelled Conquering Storm "Now back down unless you want the Raiju Clan to terminate you all!"

Suddenly, Dak jumped out from the side and he smacked Conquering Storm into a wall with one of his legs. Conquering Storm hurled into the wall and she slid down to the ground after hitting it. Dak then aimed his abdomen at her and he webbed Conquering Storm to the ground. Conquering Storm was now fixed firmly to the ground by web and she didn't have her katana with her so she couldn't cut herself free. Conquering Storm tried as hard as she could to break free of the web and stand back up but the web was too strong even for her. Dak skittered over to Conquering Storm and he looked down at the lynx in the coolie-hat that he'd managed to catch.

"I may have lost the princess but you will suffice for your interference woman!" snarled Dak.

"You spiders are all fools." muttered Conquering Storm, her

expression as stoic as it usually was "Raiju Clan! NOW!" she bellowed.

Before Dak could even figure out what was going on, the Raiju Clan all stormed into the caves and they pointed their weapons at Gina and the spider babies. Rai ran over to Dak and he sliced one of Dak's legs off with a katana. Dak's severed leg fell onto the ground and lay there, lifeless and useless to him now. Dak screamed in pain and Rai added insult to injury by dropkicking the spider and then upper-cutting him over onto his back. Rai then ran over to Conquering Storm and he sliced her web open with the katana he wielded. Conquering Storm was now free to stand back up and fight again. Conquering Storm picked herself up and she retrieved her katana blade.

"Very well done Rai." said Conquering Storm.

"Thank you honoured matron." said Rai "What shall we do about these spiders?"

"We unleash our weapon on them." said Conquering Storm "The weapon that will make sure they don't interfere with the Raiju Clan when Chun-Nan becomes ours."

Rai smiled malevolently, knowing what Conquering Storm was on about. The Raiju Ninjas all pulled out a bunch of spherical objects that they had been carrying on their belts and they threw them at the ground. The spheres broke into pieces like glass and a poisonous green gas drifted up from the remains. The Raiju Clan retreated from the caves after that, leaving the gas to fill the caves. Gina and Dak both stared in horror at the gas and they instantly knew what it was for they had seen this kind of gas before.

"Oh no!" shrieked Gina "It-It-It-It's an insecticide bomb! That gas will kill all of us! We've got to flee this cave now!"

With that said, Gina and Dak both fled for it as fast as they could before the gas could kill them. Insecticide bombs had been made as a method of fending off spiders should anyone get confronted by one. But they were expensive to buy and hard to get so few people could even get such weapons so the spiders didn't have to worry too

much about them since the likelihood of them ever coming across someone with an insecticide bomb was a hundred to one. It was just unfortunate for them that the Raiju Clan even had any at all. But Gina and Dak were well aware of what it was so they fled the caves double quick before the gas could kill them. Their children however weren't so lucky. The gas from the insecticide bomb began to spread all around the cave and the spider babies were too panicked and unsettled by the Raiju Clan's invasion to notice their parents were running away. Thus, the gas got to them and the insecticide began to kill them. The spider babies all began squealing hoarse gasps and cries for help as they felt their insides burning from the gas. Gina could hear her unfortunate children's cries for help and she stopped dead in her tracks. She looked over her shoulder and her face contorted with horror when she realized what was happening.

"Oh no! My children!" she shrieked "They haven't followed us! We must save them before that gas kills them!"

"Gina my love, we cannot save our dear offspring, that gas will kill us both if we try to save them." said Dak, holding his wife back "We must flee before that insecticide gets us."

"But my children, I can't leave them to die!" pleaded Gina.

"Everybody has to make sacrifices some times Gina." said Dak, sharing the same expression as Gina as if saying all this was painful to him "We must sacrifice our children so that the Spiders of Anarchy may live on. The group will never function without us. I swear on the blood of our children that those ninjas will pay dearly for their deaths. Their deaths will not be in vain Gina."

Gina looked at Dak, her eyes filling with green tears (spiders cry green tears). As much as it wounded her heart to have to leave her children to this grisly fate, she knew that the Spiders of Anarchy needed her and if she was dead, they'd never be able to take over Chun-Nan. Gina sighed sadly and, with great reluctance, carried on out of the cave with Dak following him. As they fled the caves, the insecticide gas in the bombs stopped spreading and just began to drift around the caves like a dense fog. The spider babies had all been killed by the gas. Their dead bodies littered the ground and

their mouths were all drooped open, giving the corpses a rather eerie look to them. Gina and Dak were parents without children now but that wasn't going to stop them from being anarchists and commencing with their goals. All this was going to do was make their vengeance against the outside world of Chun-Nan more extreme and possibly to the point they'll strike hard and strike fast and take no prisoners whatsoever. The Spiders of Anarchy will be back soon but when they will strike was just a matter of time and they will make sure that the Raiju Clan pays for this mass slaughter of theirs…

Meanwhile, Matilda and the Raiju Clan had all gathered around together a safe distance away from the spider caves and they were all conversing to one another.

"Raiju Clan, I owe you all my life." said Matilda graciously "I can't thank you enough for taking the time out of your lives to rescue me from those spiders. I'm glad to see I'm not the only one who has a big heart."

"Your compliments are appreciated Matilda." lied Conquering Storm "The Raiju Clan was just honoured to help you. We have to thank Rai though for coming across you as the spiders captured you. If Rai had never seen all this, then we wouldn't have known about your predicament."

"I'm forever in your debt Rai." said Matilda, bowing to him politely "Thank you so much."

"Think nothing of it your grace." said Rai, bowing down to her "Just doing what a Raiju Ninja has to do that's all."

"I know." said Matilda happily "But I do wonder why you were wondering around the plains in the first place. Were you up to something?"

Rai fumed to himself. Matilda was getting suspicious of him! Matilda was asking questions now! If he told her why he was here then she might begin to work out their true motives! But Rai knew how he was going to save himself from having to reveal himself. Lie about it of course. His mind was at work on a convincing lie right now.

"I was looking for that evil group of kung-fu warriors we've informed you about." he said, pleased with the lie he'd just come up with "I wanted to make sure they weren't hiding around or making their move already."

"Oh I see." said Matilda "I'm sorry if I sounded suspicious of you for a minute. I should have known better then to stick my nose into your business Rai."

"Don't fret about it Matilda." said Conquering Storm hastily "You were curious and we've satisfied your curiosity, there's no harm in that."

"OK." said Matilda "Thanks again for saving my life. I'll repay you all someday, I promise you that. I can't wait to let my dad know about this."

"Apprise your emperor on everything princess." said Conquering Storm "Especially the death of the Yīnyǐng Mao clan. He'll be delighted to hear about that."

"He sure will." said Matilda "They've caused problems for us for years and they were in on the festival folly plot last year with that traitor Governor Shen. Daddy will be very pleased to hear that the Yīnyǐng Mao clan will never bother us again."

"He will." said Conquering Storm "We bid you farewell your eminence and may our paths cross again soon."

"I sure hope so." said Matilda proudly "See you next time Raiju Clan. May you continue to honour us all with your heroism."

And with that said, Matilda left the Great Plains and she ran off for home as fast as her legs would carry her. Conquering Storm watched as Matilda left the plains and she began to scowl to herself.

"Heroism. Puh! How that word burns in my head like a bad memory!" she spat "Heroism is not honouree enough for us! The Raiju Clan is mightier then this! Matilda shall soon see how "heroic" the Raiju Clan really is!"

"Do you think we should quit playing actors and strike now

Conquering Storm?" asked Rai "I mean, that little brat got suspicious of me and started questioning me. She might start getting nosy on us if we're not careful so we should strike now before she can work us out."

"While I do not believe that Matilda will see through our act eventually, I think you're right Rai." said Conquering Storm in a cold tone of voice "Never again do I want to be commended for "heroism" as we have just been right now! If we strike now then the Raiju Clan won't suffer this dishonour ever again. Raiju Ninjas, we shall retreat back to the fortress for a couple of hours and then we shall invite Matilda over for a little revelation…"

With that said, the Raiju Ninjas all fled the Great Plains and charged off back to the fortress with Conquering Storm leading them. They sped through the plains at the speed of proper ninjas. Conquering Storm maybe pleased that Matilda still lives and their secret weapon hadn't been taken from them, she was not pleased with being labelled as a hero (or heroine in her case as she's a girl). The Raiju Clan was all about strength and might and heroism couldn't give you that so being considered heroic in anyway was undermining everything the clan is about. Once the clan revealed themselves, they would never again have such a dishonour and the poor princess would end up being forced against her will to serve the clan and help them conquer Chun-Nan whether she was willing to or not…

After returning home from the spider-caves, Matilda had gone straight to Emperor Tai and had told him everything about what had just happened to her. Tai's reaction had been a combination of horror, relief and surprise at the whole story. Horror at the fact she got captured and nearly got eaten by the Spiders of Anarchy, relief that she got saved by the Raiju Clan and surprise at the fact the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's demise. Needless to say, he was well chuffed to see Matilda alive and well and he was glad to hear that the Yīnyǐng Mao clan was never going to be a bother to the country again. After all that had been dealt with, Matilda returned to the restaurant she and Li Moon had met up at earlier before the Yīnyǐng Mao clan's interruption and she told the story to her. Li Moon was just too happy

to have Matilda back to care about anything else and now she had returned, she and Matilda could finally have lunch together. Never before had Matilda been so ready for lunch before, the whole ordeal had left her completely famished so she and Li Moon ordered the meals they wanted and after a few minutes, their meals arrived and the two girls tucked in nicely. After they had finished their lunches, they both let out a polite belch since in Chun-Nan, it's polite to do that, and Matilda sighed happily.

"Mmm…that Chow-Mien Super Noodle Supreme was as nice as it sounded." said Matilda happily, wiping her lips with a napkin "I'm amazed I managed to eat the whole thing."

"Well you said you were starving when you came back here." said Li Moon "I'm just glad you came back at all. I can't tell you how horrified I would be if you got eaten by those icky spiders."

"I almost did until Conquering Storm and her clan saved me." said Matilda "I don't know how I'll ever repay that ninja bride, she's so honouree and selfless. She honours the country almost as much as I do."

"I'd very much like to meet her." said Li Moon "What's she like?"

"Well she seems rather cold and prideful with a side of bluntness but she seems to be a generally nice woman." said Matilda "I wonder what's with her rather tough personality? Has she had a history of being with rather strict people?"

"I dunno." said Li Moon "If she's a rather cold and prideful person then I'd best be careful I don't upset her should I ever meet her."

"That would be a wise idea Li Moon." said Matilda "So I'll see you some other time. I've got to get to my kung-fu lessons now. My master said I could come back to him after I'd rested up. After all that's happened today, I'll definitely be ready for training now."

"OK then Matilda, see you later." said Li Moon cheerfully.

Matilda waved her good friend goodbye and she left the restaurant. She headed off out of the village and off to Master Kai Zen's secret

lair, humming melodically to herself. After missing out on her training this morning thanks to her nightmares keeping her up last night, she was looking forward to catching up on her lessons. She wondered what Master Kai had in store for her when she arrived at his lair. But Matilda was never going to get to Kai's lair for Rai was hiding atop the village rooftops and he had a bow and arrow with him. He aimed the arrow at the ground just behind Matilda and he pulled the bow back.

"Déjà vu." he muttered to himself "Only this time, Matilda's going to come back a bad guy."

He released the bowstring and the arrow whooshed towards the ground just inches behind Matilda. The arrow embedded itself into the ground and Matilda jumped in surprise. She twirled around and she saw the arrow embedded into the ground with a piece of paper tied around it. Rai ran off back to the Raiju Clan fortress just as Matilda bent down to pick the arrow up. Matilda yanked the arrow out of the ground and she unwrapped the note from it.

"Oh what a day!" she muttered "That's my third arrow message today! Who can it possibly be from this time and what can they want me for?"

She discarded the arrow and she looked at the note. The note read:

Dear Matilda, we apologize for interrupting you so shortly after your rescue but the Raiju Clan Fortress is under attack from the evil force we've warned you about! They hope to silence us since we know about them and we need your help and fast princess! Hurry now before the Raiju Clan becomes the first victims of this evil!

Yours sincerely, The Bride of the Conquering Storm.

Matilda was so shocked she almost fell over. She scrunched up the note and threw it away and she put her hands to her face.

"Oh no! The evil force is making its move already!" she cried "I must save Conquering Storm and her group and fast! I can't allow them to perish at their insidious hands!"

With that said, Matilda rushed off at top speed and she headed for the Raiju Clan's fortress. The note sounded incredibly urgent and the Raiju Clan seemed to be in great danger. The evil force she'd been warned about must be a serious enemy if the Raiju Clan's calling for her aid already. Nevertheless, she would beat this enemy and make sure they never get to try out their nefarious methods of evil…

An hour later, Matilda arrived at the Raiju Clan's fortress, which didn't have a guard by the door this time. In order to make the "attack" look convincing, the guard had been ordered by Conquering Storm to hide so Matilda would think he was being attacked along with the rest of the clan. The doors to the fortress were open too and there were heavy slashes on them. Those slashes had been inflicted on the doors by the Raiju Clan itself to make it look like their non-existent enemy had broken into the fortress by breaking through the doors. Matilda bought those instantly and she charged through the open doors. She rushed through the hallway and to the throne room and she burst through the doors. But to her surprise, all she ended up seeing when she entered the throne room was a battered and beaten Conquering Storm. Obviously, she was just fine, she had just put on a beaten up appearance by wearing a spare uniform which she'd cut up in several places to make it look battle-damaged, ragged and worn. She was even wearing a worn and torn coolie-hat that had lots of cuts in it. She also had her fur ruffled up and using some fur dye, made fake cuts on herself by dyeing bits of her fur red to make it look like she'd been cut in several places and her fur was stained by the blood. It had been an odious process, setting up all of this to make Matilda fall for their brilliant act but it had been well worth it since Matilda was buying all of this. Matilda ran over to Conquering Storm and knelt down by her side. Conquering Storm pretended to grunt in pain.

"Conquering Storm!" shrieked Matilda "Oh my gosh, what have those freaks done to you?!"

"What…does it…look like…you fool?!" snapped Conquering Storm "They've stormed our fortress and…beaten me up! The Raiju Ninjas…are still…fighting them in the other…rooms of the fortress…

as we speak!"

"I'm so sorry I took so long to arrive Conquering Storm!" cried Matilda, helping Conquering Storm up onto her feet, the lynx pretending to be limp and lame "You fortress is such a long way away from the village that I can't get there in record time! but now I'm here, I'll help stop this evil now."

"Thank you…honoured princess…" said Conquering Storm feebly "First…escort me out of here…as I am not…safe here…"

"Yes Conquering Storm." said Matilda, putting her arm around her shoulder and helping the lynx walk through the throne room.

But just as they were about to leave the throne room, the Raiju ninjas suddenly showed up out of nowhere and they all piled into the throne room. They surrounded Matilda and Conquering Storm and they all put on rather evil glares that made Matilda feel nervous. Conquering Storm grinned at her maliciously. How gullible this oaf of a princess was! And now she was about to realize that the Raiju Clan wasn't all it seemed. Matilda stepped back nervously.

"Um…hello?" she said "Why…are you looking at us like this?"

"Because we have a confession to make pretty princess." crooned Rai in a dark, chilling voice.

"A c-c-confession?" stammered Matilda "F-f-for what?"

"Our REAL motives!" yelled Conquering Storm, yanking her arm away from Matilda and then dropkicking the startled princess in the head.

Matilda yelped in pain as she was thrown down onto her back. Matilda gripped her head and she winced, wondering why Conquering Storm had just done that to her. Matilda stared up at Conquering Storm helplessly and Conquering Storm flashed her a malevolent grin that made her look very frightening. She then raised her fist and punched Matilda in the face. She punched the princess so hard that Matilda passed out and everything went black for her…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 98**

Looks like the Raiju Clan's getting ready to make it's insidious move at long last! Will they succeed in conquering Chun-Nan? Or can Princess Matilda save the day again? Tune into the final part of this saga as we climb the Final Step to a Conquering Storm...

A Few Steps To A Conquering Storm 4

Arc 14: A Few Steps To An Oncoming Storm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 113-115

Part 4: The Final Step Is The Stormiest

It took Princess Matilda a while to come around from Conquering Storm's ambush on her but she did at long last, slurring sleepily and wondering where she was now. Her eyes opened up very slowly, her vision blurry but clearing up bit by bit as they opened up. Matilda's eyes finally opened up and she realized where she was. She was in a dark, damp room with flame torches on the walls to lighten the room up. Strange cuffs were bolted to the wall. These were not your traditional cuffs, these kind were rectangular in shape and were two halves that were attached to each other by a hinge. The hinge allowed the cuffs to open and close and the prisoner's wrists would go through the two circle halves that were made whole when the cuffs closed. This in turn would trap the prisoner's wrists and keep them firmly fixed to the wall. Unfortunately for Matilda, she was chained up in these cuffs herself. Her arms had been raised above her head and her wrists were clamped between the cuffs. Another pair was clamped around her ankles, leaving Matilda completely immobilized and unable to go anywhere. She was firmly fixed to the wall by her wrists and ankles. Matilda looked up at her bound arms and then down at her bound legs and she tried to break free. But as she struggled in the grasps of these cuffs, they just seemed to get tighter and tighter. Definitely unusual cuffs and not a good kind of cuff to be clamped in. Matilda struggled to the point the cuffs felt like they were going to chew her hands and feet off so she stopped trying to break free as all it was doing was hurting her dearly. After Matilda stopped struggling, a familiar figure stepped out of the shadows and showed herself to the chained up princess. Matilda glowered at the figure. It was the Bride of the Conquering Storm, leader of the Raiju Clan and someone Matilda thought was a heroine and now seemed to be turning traitor. She had gotten rid of

her "battered and beaten" makeover and looked perfectly normal now.

"Acupressure cuffs." said Conquering Storm, motioning to the cuffs that were holding Matilda "The more you struggle, the tighter they get so I would not advise struggling or you may end up rendering your hands and feet permanently disabled. The last fool who tried to break out of them ended up with his hands and feet lopped off."

"Conquering Storm." growled Matilda coldly, the urge to beat the snot out of her rising high "Why have you done this to me? Why have you beaten me up and taken me prisoner? All I was doing was trying to help your clan beat this evil force you've told me about."

"You Matilda are such a dense little woman." sneered Conquering Storm, poking Matilda's nose as sharply as she could "The densest little princess in all of Chun-Nan history. The princess that preceded you wasn't as dense as you are and yet she was the one who gave birth to you."

"Leave my mother out of this!" snapped Matilda, furious at the face Conquering Storm was taunting her and using her deceased mother, Empress Tiana, as part of the insult "Now answer my question! Why have you done this to me?!"

"Because I have a confession to make and I can do without you trying to attack me." explained Conquering Storm, her expression the embodiment of vapidity "My confession is that all my bluffing of an evil force waiting to strike earlier was nothing more then a massive pretence that you have fallen for and spread around the village like wildfire."

Matilda gasped in horror. Conquering Storm had LIED to her this whole time?! There WAS no evil force around trying to take over the world and all she had done was spread around false tales among the kung-fu masters and her father?! While that was a relief to hear, the fact there was no evil kung-fu group, she wasn't pleased to have been lied to like this, especially by Conquering Storm, the very woman who saved her life earlier.

"So there is no evil kung-fu group plotting global takeover after all?"

piped Matilda "Why did you lie to me Conquering Storm?"

"So that I may convince you to help us in our true motives Matilda." purred Conquering Storm, running her hand down Matilda's side and making the mongoose shiver uncomfortably "You see, the Raiju Clan is the REAL evil force you should be rallying the country against."

"WHAT?!" screamed Matilda in shock.

"You heard correctly you gullible little brat!" cackled Conquering Storm "The Raiju Clan is secretly an evil force that is plotting to take Chun-Nan for itself! We have always been evil but our clever acting and subtle planning has clouded our real motivations from you."

"Y-y-y-you're e-e-evil?!" shrieked Matilda "Oh my gosh! I can't believe I'm hearing this right now! Th-th-th-this c-c-can't be happening! I m-m-must be having a nightmare!"

"This is no nightmare you foolish little mongoose." said Conquering Storm coldly "This is the cold, hard and terrifying truth Matilda. The Raiju Clan is equally as evil as Zira the Ruthless herself, maybe more."

"So you're really evil?" said Matilda, trying to factor all of this in while breathing very fast "I'm horrified to hear this! All this time, I've been congratulating an evil force that's plotting to capture Chun-Nan! But why did you help us defeat Zira the Ruthless those two times you've met her?"

"Isn't it obvious you stupid woman?!" snapped Conquering Storm, punching her in the gut and making Matilda wheeze in pain "Zira the Ruthless is a threat to the Raiju Clan and we only helped you take her down so that she can't get in our way! Zira is out of the Raiju Clan's way and we can capture Chun-Nan for ourselves!"

"Well if you're evil then…why did you save my life from those spiders?" asked Matilda nervously.

"Because you are our secret weapon in our conquest of Chun-Nan my dear." purred Conquering Storm "I only saved you from the

spiders because we need you."

"What do you mean?" asked Matilda "How am I you secret weapon? I'll never serve you and your evil clan in your conquest!"

"Wrong Matilda." sneered Conquering Storm "Remember our meeting earlier this morning? You honour-bound yourself to the Raiju Clan. You gave your word of honour that you will assist the Raiju Clan in any means necessary to take down the enemy and by "enemy" we meant the whole of Chun-Nan so you will help us in any means necessary to conquer Chun-Nan. That is what I mean by "secret weapon". With you on our side, our conquest of Chun-Nan shall be infinitely less onerous."

Matilda thought her heart was going to stop. She had unknowingly honour-bound herself into helping the Raiju Clan to take over Chun-Nan?! Since in Chun-Nan, one's word of honour was sacred, Matilda would have to serve the Raiju Clan and help them conquer Chun-Nan! This was the worst thing that had ever happened to her! Matilda looked down at the floor and began to feel her eyes welling up.

"No…No!" she wailed "I've been tricked into honour-binding myself to the enemy! I…I've got to serve…the Raiju Clan in their conquest of Chun-Nan! Oh what have I done?! What have I…done?!"

Matilda couldn't help but break down into tears over this whole revelation. This was so shocking to her that Matilda couldn't feel anything, not even the cuffs around her wrists and ankles. She had just unwittingly turned herself over to the villain's side and now had to serve the Raiju Clan. There was nothing Matilda could do about this. One's word of honour was sacred and she couldn't break her word as that was not the way things work in Chun-Nan. Breaking a word of honour was ultimate dishonour. Not that Matilda would care being as conquering the very country she rules along with the emperor was dis-honouree enough as it was. Conquering Storm watched as Matilda wept and she decided to pile on more revelations just to torment the horror-stricken princess.

"I guess you've also managed to work out that we were the ones who blackmailed Hydra into stealing all the water-panther's aqua-

collars, including poor little Ruben who now lives with that fool Sonic the Hedgehog." she said slyly.

"I was just beginning to wonder about that." murmured Matilda, still sobbing "I have another thing I'm wondering though…sniff…why are you like this? Why…why do you…want to conquer Chun-Nan?"

Conquering Storm narrowed her gaze at Matilda and she drew out a sharp kunai knife and pointed it at Matilda's chest. Matilda gulped nervously, her heart pounding like crazy. Was Conquering Storm going to stab her? Probably not because she'd gone through the trouble of tricking Matilda into joining the Raiju Clan so why would she stab her? Conquering Storm kept the kunai pointed at Matilda but she spoke.

"The Raiju Clan is like this because it is our destiny." explained Conquering Storm "Allow me to tell you the story of the Raiju Clan and how it formed. Before Zira the Ruthless tried to desecrate the country, the Raiju Clan did not exist. Me and my parents, or my masters as I preferred to call them, were just a trio of ninjas that lived outside Chun-Nan's borders and hungering for more than the vapid lives we lived. My masters told me that we are not meant to be ninjas that will spend their lives living outside of civilization, we are meant to be ninjas of great power much like our ancestors had been and that the only way to prove our greatness is to conquer Chun-Nan and rule the country ourselves. They knew though that the three of us weren't enough so they began gathering elite ninjas together in the hopes of forming a clan. We eventually succeeded and our first ninja clan was formed. We moved into civilization under a pretence that we're going to protect the country along with the other two clans that were around at the time when really, we were plotting to work our way into the hearts of the people and then strike and take Chun-Nan for ourselves."

"Then came Zira the Ruthless. She desecrated Chun-Nan as you know and slaughtered the three ninja clans that protected the country. My first clan was among the three that had been slaughtered. My masters had forced me to flee before Zira came anywhere near them. They told me that in the event should they get terminated, I should form a new clan, carry on in their absence and fulfil our destiny. I fled and…I never heard from my original clan

again. They had been killed by Zira along with my masters. I decided to let go of them and put it behind me instead of allowing it to get to me so I moved on and acted like none of this had happened. I formed the Raiju Clan shortly after Zira's exile and we took refuge in this fortress. And for years we've been lying low and plotting the takeover of Chun-Nan. I am going to honour my master's wishes by leading the Raiju Clan to conquest just as they wanted me to and I will not dishonour their memories by deviating from my destiny. I am meant for great things and I will not let anyone stop me from taking what is mine. The Raiju Clan will claim Chun-Nan for itself and we will prove our superiority by ruling the country and making everybody our slaves. That is why I want to conquer Chun-Nan. It is my destiny Matilda and I will not dishonour my masters before me by leaving it unfulfilled." finished Conquering Storm, lowering the kunai and keeping her gaze fixed on Matilda.

Matilda didn't know what to say about this. Conquering Storm wants to conquer Chun-Nan because she thinks it's her destiny to do so? While she never would have expected that from her, destiny was never to be used as an excuse to do something, bad or good. Conquering Storm still had no right to go about her nefarious goals.

"That was quite the story Conquering Storm." said Matilda softly "But destiny does not give you a good reason to do this. What you're doing Conquering Storm is wrong on so many levels and all you're doing is taking away innocent freedom just so that you may get what you want. You're no better than Zira the Ruthless."

One thing you must never do is tick off Conquering Storm. When that lynx snaps, she strikes in the most ferocious of ways. Conquering Storm lashed out with the kunai and she slashed Matilda across her right eye with it. Matilda screamed in pain and she rubbed her eye on her arm since her hands clamped above her head so she couldn't use them to rub it better. That attack left a long permanent scar across her right eye that would remain there forever. Conquering Storm than pointed the kunai at Matilda again, the mongoose jumping in surprise.

"Don't you dare pontificate me princess!" snarled Conquering Storm "I do not care if what I am doing is wrong! If conquering Chun-Nan is my destiny then it must be fulfilled! You Chun-Nan people know a lot

about destiny yourselves and I'm sure you have destinies of your own that must be fulfilled! And as for Zira, I am much better then that poorly trained demon! Whereas she just blindly attacks and expects to win all the time, I rely on cleverness, cunning and subtlety and those traits are going to help me succeed where Zira keeps failing! If you dare insult my honour again Matilda then I will tear out one of your eyes as punishment!"

"Y-y-y-yes Conquering Storm." gulped Matilda, shivering in fear "S-so, what are you going to do t-to me wh-when you conquer Chun-Nan? Am I surplus to requirements after that?"

"No Matilda, you shall be my personal bodyguard." said Conquering Storm, putting the kunai away "You're more valuable to me alive then dead. You will do a magnificent job of keeping out anyone who wishes to usurp my position."

"I see." said Matilda glumly "One more thing Conquering Storm. Please, I beg of you, please don't make me kill anyone. Especially my dad. I could never bring myself to do such a thing."

"The Raiju Clan does not wish to kill anybody anyway princess." said Conquering Storm bluntly "We wish to enslave the population. When we begin our conquest, we will push any resistance in line and if they continue to resist me even after conquest, then they will be killed. But I'm sure the population won't be so unreasonable with us. They'll succumb to our might easily and I'm sure they'll know their place once Chun-Nan's ours."

With that said, Conquering Storm then pulled out a key from her belt and she used it to unlock Matilda's cuffs. She first unlocked Matilda's ankles, and then she unlocked Matilda's wrists. The cuffs opened up and Matilda brought her arms back down. She rubbed her wrists tenderly and she resisted the urge to deck Conquering Storm here and there. As much as she wanted to, she can't since she's honour-bound to the clan and has to serve them. Conquering Storm smiled at Matilda and she led the defeated princess out of the dungeon.

"I hope you're ready Matilda because the Raiju Clan makes its move right now." she purred wickedly "Say goodbye to a peaceful and free Chun-Nan because it is soon to become Raiju Clan territory."

"I already have." muttered Matilda "I'm so not going to enjoy this."

"So what if you don't?" hissed Conquering Storm "I never said you had to enjoy it did I? Now cease your mindless whining, I do not want you doing that when the takeover begins."

Matilda decided to just shut up now since it would be unwise to purge Conquering Storm's anger further. She felt the long, thick scar she now had across her eye. That alone was enough to tell her not to cross any lines with Conquering Storm. If she went any further she may lose her whole eye. But when this conquest began, Matilda would lose more then anybody knew. As she followed Conquering Storm out of the dungeon, she knew that this day was going to be her darkest hour…

Back at the village, Bladefeather the Falcon and his good friend Mushu the Iguana were on patrol and making sure that no evil kung-fu warriors were hiding amongst the villagers. Ever since Matilda had warned them on this non-existent evil that Conquering Storm had told her about, Bladefeather and Mushu had been on high alert. They had informed their master, the steel-quill porcupine known as Master Gāng, about this evil force and he was on high alert too. Pity that they were all rallying up against a non-existent enemy. As Bladefeather and Mushu patrolled through the village, Bladefeather began to wonder something.

"You know something Mushu?" he asked "One question makes my mind wonder like a homeless vagabond. Who could this evil group of kung-fu warriors be I wonder? I do sincerely hope it's not comprised of familiar faces and treacherous fiends or I will go mental."

Mushu nodded agreeably. Chun-Nan had seen quite enough traitors in it's time after all. Zira the Ruthless and Governor Shen were all bad enough as they were, they didn't need another group of turncoats threatening Chun-Nan's peace.

"One thing that I strive to find the answer to is who this group's leader is and why he directs the group to such vulgar actions."

wondered Bladefeather "After all, everybody has a reason for what they do, be it legitimate or not. We all know why Zira cast her hide over to the evil side. She let her incredibly high anger levels consume her heart and leave her with no decency left in her. Governor Shen betrayed us all because he had been dethroned early due to his unpopularity amongst the villagers and he just wanted his throne back, especially as he incorrectly believes that our good Emperor Tai was worsening the country, not improving it. So this kung-fu group and its leader must have a reason for their boorish actions."

Mushu nodded again. He then said something to Bladefeather in sign language. Bladefeather read his signs like a book and knew what he was saying.

"How serious do you think the threat will be?" read Bladefeather as Mushu signed to him "Well if the Raiju Clan required the assistance of our dear Princess Matilda then it must be a very potent group who will pose a very serious threat to us all. No matter though, we shall quell this evil much like how we've quelled evil in the past."

As Bladefeather and Mushu conversed with each other, they were approached by a very worried looking Emperor Tai. Matilda hadn't returned from her meal with Li Moon and he was worried sick about her. He was looking around the village for her and he happened to come across Bladefeather and Mushu on his search. He decided to ask the two if they'd seen Matilda, especially Bladefeather since he and Matilda were head-over-heels for each other.

"Hello there you two." said Emperor Tai quietly.

Bladefeather and Mushu stopped talking to each other and they looked at Tai, surprised to see him here.

"Greetings emperor." said Bladefeather, bowing down to the emperor mongoose "What brings your royal presence here then?"

"I'm worried about my little treasure Bladefeather." said Tai meekly "Matilda said to me she'd come back to the pagoda after her lunch with Li Moon and she hasn't come back yet. Have you seen her anywhere?"

"I regret to inform you emperor but I have not sighted your magnanimous daughter anywhere around this village throughout my time here so far." said Bladefeather grimly "But if my beautiful flower petal hasn't returned to you at the time she designated she would return then we should look for her. I do hope she's OK, I cannot bear the thought of someone doing something horrible to my fair princess."

"Thank you Bladefeather." said Tai brightly "So do you think we should split up and search for Matilda? Or do you think we should all stick together?"

"I think it'd be best if we all stuck together." said Bladefeather "For all we know, this evil force that Matilda's apprised us on might be the ones responsible for her disappearance and they could be hoping to strike out on us at any moment. If we stick together then we will be harder to pick off."

Mushu signed out the words "I agree" with his hands. He thought that Bladefeather had a good idea.

"Very well Bladefeather." said Emperor Tai "We shall stick together and look for Matilda. I do hope something bad hasn't happened to her."

"If something bad has happened to Chun-Nan's little angel then I will take it upon myself to deliver merciless penance to the fiends who dare to harm her!" growled Bladefeather, pulling out a dagger from nowhere and twirling it around.

"You can stop worrying about me you three, I'm just fine." said a familiar voice that they hadn't been expecting to hear right now.

Tai, Bladefeather and Mushu all looked over in the direction of the voice and they all stared in surprise at who it was. It was none other than Princess Matilda standing there and she didn't look too happy with herself. She was wearing a glum expression that made her look like someone she knew had just died. Tai sighed with relief, happy to see Matilda back in the village safe and sound.

"Oh thank goodness." said Tai with relief "Matilda's returned home

at last. What kept you dearest?"

"I got a little sidetracked that's all daddy." said Matilda "I'm fine though, please don't fuss over me."

"Well we're glad you returned Matilda because your father was beginning to worry about you." said Bladefeather, putting his dagger away and walking up to Matilda "Because you're back though, we can subside our worries and…"

He stopped dead in his tracks when he saw Matilda's scar over her right eye. Bladefeather stared at the scar in surprise and he began to wonder what had just happened.

"Great heavens!" cried Bladefeather "Matilda my love, how on Mobius did you get that scar?!"

Tai and Mushu were both surprised to hear this and they stared at Matilda too, noticing her scar and wondering where she got it from. Matilda realized what Bladefeather meant and she felt the scar on her eye. It seemed that she would have some explaining to do before the Raiju Clan could make its move. Matilda sighed and explained to Bladefeather.

"A ninja gave me it." she said dully.

"A ninja did it? Who might that ninja be then?" asked Bladefeather, angered at the very thought of someone daring to harm Matilda like this.

"Her." said Matilda, looking over her shoulder and motioning at something.

It turned out that the Raiju Clan had been hiding at this very moment and Matilda signalled for them to come out so that their conquest could begin. The ninjas all somersaulted out of their hiding places and they landed on the ground beside Matilda. Conquering Storm stepped forward with an evil glare on her face. Tai, Bladefeather and Mushu stared at the Raiju Clan in confusion, wondering what on Mobius could possibly be going on here.

"Bride of the Conquering Storm." said Emperor Tai slowly "How nice

to see you here. What brings the Raiju Clan to these holy grounds then?"

"We have come here to claim Chun-Nan as our own emperor." announced Conquering Storm dryly "You will surrender the country to us and accept the Raiju Clan as the rightful rulers of this country or we will be forced to hurt you badly."

Tai thought his ears were going to fall off. Conquering Storm was demanding him to surrender the country to her? What on Mobius was going on with the Raiju Clan all of the sudden? Did something get to them?

"Conquering Storm, why ever are you demanding me to surrender the country to you?" asked Tai in a stern voice.

"Because the Raiju Clan's destiny is to conquer Chun-Nan and rule it through might and strength." said Conquering Storm "We've spent all this while plotting this takeover and manipulating you all into thinking we were defenders when really, we wish to claim the country for our own. I'm giving you this one chance to back down and allow the Raiju Clan to take what we deserve and if you don't back down then we'll take it by force if we have to!"

"So you and your clan are really villains?!" snarled Bladefeather, pointing a dagger at Conquering Storm's face "And you wish to conquer Chun-Nan much like Zira the Ruthless does?! Well just for that, I shall make you all suffer for this treachery and I will not be very lenient on you!"

"Don't bother." sneered Conquering Storm, casually brushing Bladefeather's dagger away "For we have a secret weapon on our side and it's a weapon that'll make our conquest infinitely less onerous."

"What kind of weapon?" asked Tai nervously.

Conquering Storm just grinned at him and then barked out "Matilda, attack the falcon!"

Matilda reluctantly obeyed her new master's wish and she lashed

out and slugged Bladefeather in the gut. The falcon wheezed in pain and he fell down to the ground, coughing and spluttering. He was so shocked at the fact his own girlfriend had just attacked him that he couldn't speak or move. Tai thought he was going to faint.

"Matilda, why did you do that?!" demanded Tai furiously.

"I'm really sorry daddy…but I'm with the Raiju Clan now." said Matilda sadly "But not intentionally."

"You see emperor, we goaded Matilda into honour-binding herself to the clan with our ruse about an evil kung-fu force." explained Conquering Storm "She gave her word of honour that she would assist the Raiju Clan in any means necessary to defeat he enemy. Little did she know that by "enemy" we meant Chun-Nan, so she now has to help us conquer the country."

"WHAT?!" shrieked Bladefeather, picking himself up and speechless at what he had just heard "You fiends lied about an evil kung-fu force and manipulated Matilda into honour-binding herself to the Raiju Clan?! She's now on your side?! How dare you make the princess betray us all like this! I will eviscerate you all piece by piece for that!"

"I don't think so." purred Conquering Storm "Matilda, you keep those three busy while we ransack the place."

"Yes Conquering Storm." said Matilda grimly, cracking her knuckles.

With that said, the Raiju Clan ran on ahead while Matilda stayed where she was and she prepared to fight Bladefeather and Mushu. The two bent down in a battle-ready stance and they prepared to let Matilda have it. Tai just stood back and looked worried.

"Matilda dearest, please don't betray us like this." begged Tai "You strive to protect the country, not conquer it."

"I'm sorry dad but I'm with the Raiju Clan now." said Matilda coldly "That means I HAVE to serve them whether I like it or not. So I have to make sure you three don't interfere with Conquering Storm's plans."

"Then we will have to stop you Matilda." said Bladefeather, drawing out a pair of daggers and preparing to throw them "As much as it'll pain me to harm you princess, I will have to do so since you are now an enemy."

Mushu bared his teeth and he had an expression that suggested he was saying "You're dead meat traitor!" on his face.

"Do not go easy on her." said Bladefeather "Matilda is renowned for her strength and if we're to defeat her then we'll have to take her on together and we should give it our all."

Mushu nodded.

"Please don't make me fight you." begged Matilda, really not wanting to do this.

"We have no choice Matilda." snarled Bladefeather "We will defend our country, even from you."

With that said, Bladefeather charged towards Matilda, crying at the top of his voice and twirling the daggers around. How it strained his heart that he would have to beat up his own girlfriend since she had been tricked into honour-binding herself to the Raiju Clan. But Bladefeather swore to protect Chun-Nan and he would do so from anyone, even his own girlfriend. Bladefeather jumped into the air and prepared to attack but Matilda was ready for him. Matilda lunged up and dropkicked Bladefeather directly in the stomach. This caused Bladefeather to drop his daggers and fall to the ground. Bladefeather grimaced in pain and before he could even get up, Matilda kicked him and sent him rolling across the ground. Mushu lashed out and tried to bite Matilda but Matilda dodged the attack with ease and she elbowed the iguana in the back of his head. Mushu was sent hurling forwards and he hit the ground face first. Mushu tried to get back up but Matilda grabbed his tail and swung him over onto his back. Bladefeather tried to attack Matilda but the mongoose swung Mushu around and walloped him with the iguana. Bladefeather was sent hurling backwards and he crashed into a wok stall. Bladefeather growled furiously and he began to throw a bunch of woks at Matilda. Matilda held Mushu up and let him take the brunt of the flying woks. The woks all hit Mushu but given his tough hide,

they didn't hurt him as much as they could have done. Matilda then threw Mushu at Bladefeather but Bladefeather caught him in his arms and put him down. Bladefeather began to throw daggers like crazy at Matilda but Matilda threw herself down onto the ground to dodge the daggers. She then rolled away from where Bladefeather was firing and leaped back onto her feet. She picked up a wok and used it as a shield to defend herself from Bladefeather's daggers. She then ran towards Bladefeather and threw the wok at him. Bladefeather just kicked it back towards Matilda. Matilda dodged the wok and she ran towards Bladefeather. Bladefeather threw a dagger towards her but Matilda caught it and now ended up wielding it. Bladefeather drew two more daggers out and he and Matilda ended up having a dagger fight with them. The two began to clash daggers with each other and the speed they were going at was a speed only kung-fu masters or indeed, any other martial arts master could achieve. Matilda however won the fight by slashing Bladefeather's arm and making the falcon scream in pain. Matilda then threw the dagger away and she grabbed Bladefeather by his robes. She hurled Bladefeather across the battlefield and he landed at the feet of the horrified Emperor Tai who could only watch in horror as his own daughter began beating up Bladefeather and Mushu. Mushu leaped on Matilda from behind and he tackled her down to the ground but Matilda effortlessly threw him off of herself and got back to her feet. Mushu tried to grab her but Matilda roundhouse kicked him in the jaw. Mushu clutched his jaw in pain, giving Matilda the chance to fist-slam him on his shoulders with both fists. She then uppercut Mushu onto his back and the iguana grimaced as pain surged through his body. If he could still talk, he'd probably be groaning in pain. Matilda began to pant tiredly. She felt dreadful having to harm her boyfriend and his friend like this and she really wished she'd never honour-bound herself to the clan. Emperor Tai decided to stop his daughter dead in her tracks by sneaking up on her and using his nerve freezing manoeuvre on her, the very move that subdued Zira the Ruthless long enough for her to be arrested. Tai lunged forward with his arm but Matilda heard him and she grabbed his arm. She then proceeded to bend Tai's arm so it was now pointing at him and she made him prod himself in the gut. Matilda had just made Tai use his nerve-freezing move on himself. Tai's joints all froze up and he fell to the ground, completely unable to move now. Matilda looked at her dad in shame, unable to believe

she'd just done that to him.

"I'm so sorry daddy." she said "But there's nothing I can do about this. I'm with Conquering Storm now. I wish I wasn't but I am and there's no way I can get out of this."

Then suddenly, a robed figure jumped out of nowhere and kicked Matilda away from the emperor. It was Master Kai Zen! He had decided to come up to the surface to see how things were getting on and to his horror, the Raiju Clan was attacking Chun-Nan and his best student Princess Matilda was attacking Bladefeather, Mushu and Emperor Tai. He decided to step in and give Matilda what for. Matilda landed on the ground and she began to wonder what had hit her. She saw Master Kai standing before her and she gasped in horror. Being as Master Kai was her kung-fu teacher, she knew better then to mess with him and the fact he was here just scared her to death.

"M-M-M-Master!" she stammered, crawling backwards away from him.

"How dare you betray us Matilda!" snarled Master Kai, advancing on the princess menacingly "You were my best student! I raised you to be a kung-fu expert and I taught you kung-fu so you may defend the country from the most dangerous fiends out there! And yet you're attacking the kung-fu masters and your own father! I had a vision that hinted at treachery, but I had no idea that it was referring to the Raiju Clan and you Matilda!"

"Master please! I'm sorry about all this!" whimpered Matilda feebly "The Raiju Clan manipulated me into honour-binding myself to them so I've gotta serve them! As it turns out, the Raiju Clan are evil and I'm forced to help them conquer Chun-Nan thanks to the word of honour they tricked me into giving out! I'm really sorry I have to do this master, please forgive me!"

She hid her face behind her arms and began to cower before her master. Master Kai took all of this in rather easily and he quickly understood the situation. Matilda had been tricked into honour-binding herself to the Raiju Clan and they were evil so she had to help them commence with their evil plans against her will. However,

the clever Master Kai knew how to get Matilda out of this pickle though.

"I understand now my child." said Kai in a much softer tone of voice "You were manipulated by the clan into honour-binding yourself to them. I do not blame you, the Raiju Clan did an excellent job of fooling the population into thinking they were heroes when really they're villains. Even I was fooled by them. Well Matilda, I have a way of getting you out of this predicament."

"Really?!" piped Matilda excitedly "What is it master? Please tell me!"

"Reject the Raiju Clan, renounce your ties with them and honour-bind yourself to someone else." said Kai "Conquering Storm did not say your word of honour cannot be countermanded did she?"

"No master." said Matilda, a gleaming ray of hope tingling inside her stomach.

"Well then, that is your answer Matilda." said Kai brightly "Honour-bind yourself to someone else and abdicate your ties with the Raiju Clan. And so this can never happen again, make sure you say that your word of honour cannot be countermanded."

"OK then master, on my word of honour, I will reject the Raiju Clan and go back to my old roots as princess and defender of Chun-Nan." said Matilda eagerly "My word of honour cannot be countermanded."

"Very well said Matilda and welcome back to the side of good." said Master Kai happily, helping Matilda back onto her feet "Now you may help us stop the Raiju Clan from commencing with their nefarious goals."

"Yes Master." said Matilda "You free my dad from his nerve-freeze while I deal with Conquering Storm. Tell Bladefeather and Mushu I'm back on their side now."

"No need to princess, we watched the whole thing." said Bladefeather, who was rubbing himself and walking up to Matilda

with Mushu beside him "We're so glad that your master managed to help you get out of this predicament."

"I'm glad too." said Matilda "I'm so sorry I beat you two up. Now I'm no longer with the Raiju Clan, I can attack our true enemies instead."

"We forgive you Matilda." said Bladefeather softly "We understand your situation and how the Raiju Clan tricked you into joining them. Now that you're back with us, we can deliver merciless penance to those treacherous canailles!"

"I couldn't agree more Bladefeather." said Matilda brightly "I'll see you guys later, I'm going after the woman in charge."

"We bid you a temporary valediction Matilda." said Bladefeather "We shall see you when the battle is over."

Matilda gave Bladefeather a quick goodbye kiss and then she ran off to find Conquering Storm and give her the beating she deserved for doing all of this to her. Bladefeather and Mushu ran off after her to deal with the clan members while Master Kai remained behind to free Emperor Tai from nerve-paralysis. After he'd done that he'd join in the battle too and then he could give the Raiju Clan what for. They would not survive a match with him on the loose given how powerful he was…

As for the Raiju Clan, they were beginning to cause a huge rampage through the village of Chun-Nan. Conquering Storm's ninjas were all breaking into homes and forcing citizens out into the open so that they can see how serious the Raiju Clan is, some homes even had fire set to them just to create the kind of atmosphere Conquering Storm wanted and some ninjas led by Dàfēng Rai began pillaging all the nearby stalls and shops and wrecking everything on sale. When the Raiju Clan took over the country, there wouldn't be anything to sell or buy since Conquering Storm didn't want shops around in her Chun-Nan. Conquering Storm admired all the carnage that was going on and was very pleased to see her plan in action at last. All those years of deception had finally paid off and everything was

going her way. The Raiju Clan would be on top of the country in no time and with Matilda keeping any pesky resistance at bay, nobody could stop them.

"The Raiju Clan finally makes its move and everything is going according to plan." she said to herself as she watched the populace being rounded up "The fire has started and it now begins to burn down the peaceful, holy Chun-Nan. And from the ashes, a new, mightier, stronger Chun-Nan will rise up and stand proudly over where its original state once stood! At long last, I have fulfilled my family's destiny. My masters would be so proud of me if they were still around to see all this happen. They said I was destined for power and I'm finally going to get it."

The ninja lynx in the coolie-hat was well pleased to see all this carnage going on before her. How she was going to enjoy her rule over Chun-Nan when the Raiju Clan's takeover finally finished. She already had plans for the emperor and the kung-fu warriors once Matilda had finished with them. She was just going to lock them up and torture them for her amusement. And maybe she could add more prisoners to have fun with like anyone associated with Matilda such as Li Moon or any of the water panther brides such as the Bride of the Peaceful Earth from the Zhangcháo clan. They would be a lot of fun to torture and beat up. But it seemed Conquering Storm's conquest may end up going belly up for her for Princess Matilda found the rampaging Raiju Clan at last and she charged towards Conquering Storm as fast as she could. Conquering Storm heard Matilda coming and she wondered what the rush was for. She soon found out for Matilda jumped up towards her and delivered a powerful punch to the middle of Conquering Storm's face and sent the insidious clan leader hurling backwards and crashing into the ground a good few feet away. The Raiju Clan stopped what they were doing and they stared in horror at Matilda, wondering why she was attacking Conquering Storm. The citizens, who were all being rounded up, all beamed happily at the sight of Matilda, here to help them all at last. Li Moon was among the crowd and she was happier than everybody else.

"Matilda's here to save us!" cried Li Moon "She's gonna stop those treacherous Raiju Ninjas!"

Conquering Storm picked herself up and she clenched her teeth. Matilda stood before Conquering Storm and prepared to unleash hell on her.

"Matilda! How dare you assault your new master!" snarled Conquering Storm "Why are you going against your word of honour?!"

"I've rejected my ties with you Conquering Storm and I've honour-bound myself to my duty!" explained Matilda "And my word of honour cannot be countermanded this time so you'll never get me back on your side ever again!"

"Grrr! How could I have forgotten to say that when I tricked you into honour-binding yourself to me?!" growled Conquering Storm furiously "Now I've lost what could have been my greatest weapon ever! No matter, I'll conquer Chun-Nan without you helping me Matilda! I only tricked you into joining us so you our job would be easier without you in the way! But since you're back on the side of good, I will put you down princess! I've been training myself vigorously for the inevitable day we battle each other and now I'll get to put it to good use!"

"I don't care how strong you are Conquering Storm, you are going down and you will share a cell with Zira in the Lóng de dòngxué prison!" said Matilda coldly "I will give you once chance to save yourself a relentless beating though. Please stand down and surrender Conquering Storm and I won't have to hurt you and your clan."

Conquering Storm's response was to lunge at Matilda and slug the princess in the gut. Matilda doubled over in pain and she wheezed ever so hoarsely. Conquering Storm then retracted her arm and clasped her hands together. She slammed them on Matilda's head and knocked her down onto the ground. She then let Matilda have it with her iron-toed footwear by kicking the princess while she was done. Matilda rolled across the ground and she grimaced in pain. Conquering Storm glowered at her and she advanced on Matilda.

"I've already left my mark on you Matilda, pray I don't leave any more on you when I'm finished with you, you pontificating, arrogant,

obnoxious little brat!" snarled Conquering Storm "If you want me arrested and incarcerated then you will have to catch me!"

With that said, Conquering Storm bolted off at ninja speed long before Matilda could even stand back up. Matilda moaned in annoyance and she ran off after Conquering Storm, leaving the Raiju Clan to deal with Master Kai, Bladefeather and Mushu, who were just coming in to fend them off right now. Bladefeather and Mushu's mentor Master Gāng was here too and he started off the attack by throwing his trademark steel quills at the ninjas. The moment Matilda had left, the Raiju ninjas and the kung-fu masters instantly began to have a big brawl with each other. The Chun-Nan village was filled with flying weapons and launching punches. This was already becoming on fierce fight and the winner of this battle was anyone's guess. The kung-fu masters had better win this one or Chun-Nan was doomed to live a life of slavery and dominance…

As for Matilda, she was beginning to catch up with Conquering Storm. She was running through the village and heading for some kind of warehouse on the west side of the village. The warehouse looked worn down and out of use, meaning no lives would be endangered here when the two women started fighting each other. Conquering Storm grinned maliciously to herself, pleased to see Matilda was falling for her trap. She was leading Matilda there on purpose so she may beat up Matilda in the warehouse and then kill her. Matilda had no idea who she was up against since Conquering Storm and she had never fought before and Conquering Storm had been training herself to be even stronger then her. That and her heavy reliance on defence was going to be a problem for Matilda when they fought. Matilda continued to chase Conquering Storm but she couldn't catch her because Conquering Storm was too fast for her. She ended up following Conquering Storm into the warehouse and she leaped through a window after watching Conquering Storm do the same. Matilda somersaulted through the window and then landed on a walkway. Matilda crept across the walkway and looked around for Conquering Storm. The warehouse she was in had two walkways and lots of chains hanging from the ceiling with hooks on the end. Very sharp looking hooks too. Matilda didn't trust this dark environment and she felt very uncomfortable being here, knowing that Conquering Storm was lying in wait for her. To Matilda's

surprise though, Conquering Storm, who was hanging from the ceiling by holding onto a light, jumped down behind her and knocked her down onto the floor of the walkway. Matilda tried to get up but Conquering Storm kicked the kung-fu princess across the walkway as hard as she could. Matilda rolled over and landed on her face a few paces up the walkway. Matilda picked herself up and she prepared to do battle with the lynx in the iron-toed footwear.

"If this is to be our battlefield Conquering Storm then I'll accept it." said Matilda "Now brace yourself, I will not hold back on you despite my hatred of violence."

"I will not hold back on you either you peace-loving scum!" snarled Conquering Storm "Prepare to receive more scars Matilda."

Matilda just felt the scar across her eye and she raised her fists. The time had come at last, Matilda vs. Conquering Storm and the winner will take all while the loser will join their ancestors. Matilda charged towards Conquering Storm, screaming at the top of her voice in a fearsome battle cry. Big mistake though for Conquering Storm grabbed the railings of the walkway and she swung her legs up and kangaroo kicked Matilda in the gut, knocking Matilda back a few walkway sections. Matilda picked herself up only to get gut-punched again by Conquering Storm and then the lynx proceeded to let Matilda have it in the face with some very well thrown roundhouse punches. Conquering Storm roundhouse punched Matilda twice and then uppercut the princess in the chin. Matilda staggered backwards, clutching her chin and gritting her teeth in anger. Matilda ran towards Conquering Storm and threw a couple of roundhouse punches at Conquering Storm but the lynx dodged them with ease. Matilda launched a kick at Conquering Storm but Conquering Storm brusher her leg to the side with her arm and knocked her down onto her side. Conquering Storm then decided to stomp on Matilda before she could get up. Conquering Storm kicked upwards and knocked Matilda across the walkway again. Matilda picked herself up and yelled in annoyance. She noticed a nearby hanging chain with a hook on it and she reached out to grab it. She grabbed it and she slashed at Conquering Storm with the hook. Conquering Storm just grabbed the hook and yanked the chain out of Matilda's grasp. She slashed at Matilda with the hook and left a deep cut on Matilda's arm

as she held it up to block the attack. Matilda screamed in pain and she clutched her throbbing arm. Conquering Storm then spun the hook around and threw it towards Matilda like it was a battering ram. The hook hit Matilda above the bridge of her nose and knocked her down onto her back. Matilda picked herself up and she lunged at Conquering Storm. Conquering Storm stopped her by holding the chain in front of herself and letting Matilda's fist hit it. Conquering Storm then wrapped the chain and hook around Matilda's wrist and pulled on it, bringing Matilda down onto her face. Conquering Storm stomped on Matilda's face and then threw her over the side of the walkway. Matilda would have plunged straight down to the floor had it not been for the hook and chain wrapped around her arm. Matilda was now dangling above the floor by her arm. The chain wrapped even tighter around her arm thanks to the weight of Matilda at the bottom of it. Matilda ignored the massive strain in her arm and he grabbed the chain with her other hand. She pulled herself up the chain and managed to unwrap her other arm from it. She could now climb up the chain with both hands now. Matilda pulled herself up the chain and stepped onto the hook. She was now standing on the hook and waiting for Conquering Storm to come and get her. Conquering Storm obliged and she leaped from the walkway and onto another hook and chain that was near Matilda. The two women were now standing on hooks and preparing to do battle with each other. Matilda swung herself towards Conquering Storm and tried to kick her off of the hook but Conquering Storm blocked the blow and threw her backwards. Matilda held on tightly to the chain as she was swung backwards and the chain swung back towards Conquering Storm. Conquering Storm punched Matilda but Matilda managed to hold onto the chain as it spiralled around. Matilda regained balance and she punched at Conquering Storm. Conquering Storm caught her fist in her grasp and threw her arm downwards, almost causing Matilda to fall off her chain but she held on with her other hand so she didn't fall. Matilda groaned in annoyance and she decided to distract Conquering Storm by kicking off her slippers at her. She flicked her feet out and sent her purple slippers hurling towards Conquering Storm. But Conquering Storm bent down and blocked them with her coolie-hat, causing them to fall down to the floor. The distraction worked and Matilda kicked Conquering Storm in the cranium. That ended up giving Conquering Storm a big headache. Conquering Storm leaped off the hook she was on and grabbed

another chain and hook that was nearby. Conquering Storm swung herself towards Matilda and then she leaped off the hook. She reached behind her and drew out a katana that she had sheathed in a scabbard she was carrying on her back. She sliced Matilda's chain in two and sent the princess falling down to the ground. Matilda fell down to the floor with the hook of the chain following her. Conquering Storm however landed on another hook and then somersaulted down to the floor. Matilda was down on her side, grimacing in pain at the pain in her feet she felt after landing feet first on the floor. It would have hurt less if she wasn't barefoot right now. Conquering Storm twirled the katana around and smirked at Matilda.

"You haven't been keeping to your training well have you princess?" she sneered "You're putting up an abysmal performance. I'm winning easily. Right now I'm beginning to wonder how you managed to stop Zira from escaping the Lóng de dòngxué prison."

Matilda fumed at Conquering Storm, not tolerating her insults at all. She wasn't that easy to rile but when she got mad, there was no holding her back. Matilda picked up the hook, which had some chain left on it, and she swung the hook around. She threw it at Conquering Storm but Conquering Storm sliced the hook and chain to pieces with her katana. She then lashed towards Matilda and slashed at her. Matilda ducked but the tip of the katana blade caught the band around her hair that kept it into a bun. This caused her hair to unfurl and droop down over her shoulders like it always did when it wasn't wrapped up into a bun. Her hair sticks fell out onto the floor too. Matilda's hair was now long and flowing instead of in a bun. Matilda just got angrier at Conquering Storm since she didn't like people who mess with her hair and she punched at Conquering Storm. Conquering Storm dodged the attack and tried to slice Matilda's arm off but Matilda retracted it just in time to save herself a limb decapitation. Conquering Storm swiped the katana at Matilda again but she missed as Matilda dodged and Matilda kicked at her. Conquering Storm grabbed Matilda's foot and sharply twisted it to one side, causing Matilda to fall over and yelp in pain. Conquering Storm then raised the katana up and tried to slice Matilda's leg off but Matilda managed to yank her leg out of Conquering Storm's grip, leaving her to strike the ground instead. Conquering Storm fumed madly and she sheathed the katana, seeing as it wasn't going to be

helpful to her as Matilda was too hard to hit with the katana. She decided to just user her fists instead. Matilda lunged at Conquering Storm but Conquering Storm grabbed Matilda's arm and threw her over onto her back. Matilda grimaced as her back hit the ground sharply. Conquering Storm gave Matilda a sharp kick before the princess could stand up and the kick was powerful enough to send Matilda hurling over onto her front. Matilda picked herself up and began throwing punches as desperately as she could. Conquering Storm blocked all of her attacks with ease though and launched some powerful punches herself. She hit Matilda in the face, one of her eyes, the gut and even in the shoulders. The punch to the eye ended up bruising it and she now had a black eye. Conquering Storm then performed her deadly sweep kick attack on the princess. She tripped Matilda up with a sweeping 360 kick and before Matilda could land on the floor, Conquering Storm kicked Matilda and sent her flying across the room and crashing into a wall. Matilda slumped against the wall and she coughed hoarsely, pain sweeping over her body. Matilda tried to pick herself up but she couldn't find the strength to do so. Conquering Storm advanced on Matilda and she grabbed the beaten princess.

"You should have stayed on our side Matilda." crowed Conquering Storm "And that way, your coming death wouldn't be coming for you now."

She then proceeded to drag Matilda a few paces away from the wall and then throw her straight through it. Matilda crashed through the wall and landed a good few feet outside away from the warehouse and rolling across the ground. Matilda lay on her side and she tensed up in pain. This was by far the worst beating she'd ever received. Not even Zira the Ruthless had been this hard to fight. Conquering Storm must have been training herself very callously if she can match Matilda blow for blow and not receive much of a blow from Matilda. Matilda had only managed to land one attack on Conquering Storm throughout the whole fight. Conquering Storm leaped out of the warehouse and she landed just in front of Matilda. Matilda got up on one knee, clutching her arm and panting and gasping. Conquering Storm just smirked at her.

"I warned you Matilda." said Conquering Storm coldly "And now your

refusal to listen will end up costing you your poor excuse for a life."

Matilda was not going to back down so easily so she forced herself back up onto her feet and tried to attack Conquering Storm but Conquering Storm blocked her attacks with ease and she kicked Matilda in the gut. Matilda doubled over and fell onto her hands and knees. Conquering Storm then kicked Matilda over onto her back and the princess laid there, pain sweeping over her face like an ocean current. Matilda was still refusing to go down so she picked herself up, only to get slashed across the side with Conquering Storm's katana. Matilda was brought down onto her knees again and she clutched her wounded side, which had a deep cut on it and was bleeding, staining her radiant purple dress with blood. Matilda tried to get back up again but after this beating she'd received, she just couldn't get back up. The beating she'd received was too great and she just couldn't get back up. Her strength was giving out on her. Conquering Storm smirked at Matilda and she aimed her katana at Matilda's neck.

"This fight has been wonderful exercise Matilda." crooned Conquering Storm "And now I've had my exercise, you're surplus to requirements and it's time for you to meet your mother."

Matilda just sat there on her knees and awaited her punishment. One thing she couldn't help but wonder is how Conquering Storm seemed to know about her deceased mother. That was a question she'd never find the answer to for her death was coming now. Conquering Storm was about to slice Matilda's head off but a robed figure leaped in and knocked her backwards. It was Master Kai again! He, Bladefeather and Mushu had caught up with Matilda to see how she was doing and to their horror, she was battered and beaten and awaiting execution. Matilda looked up at her master and she beamed happily.

"M…M…Master." she said "Y…you've c…come…at last…"

"I have Matilda." said Master Kai "And unfortunately, you cannot seem to defeat Conquering Storm. That is not the worst news though. The Raiju Clan is proving too powerful for us all to defeat. It took us this long just to get through them and to you my child. We're fighting a losing battle and we must resort to other methods.

Bladefeather, you take Matilda and find a man with a cart. When you do, tell that man to take her to the home place of the Acorn Family. When he arrives there, Matilda will receive medical care from the residents there and she will recruit the Royal Fighters to help us. We need extra support here."

"I shall follow that request to the letter kung-fu master of great power." said Bladefeather, avoiding using Kai's real name as he was a vigilante kung-fu warrior and didn't want anyone to know his name sans Matilda as she was his student.

Bladefeather reached down and scooped up Matilda in his arms, carrying her bridal style.

"Master…please…don't make me…abandon my country…" begged Matilda "I…I can't…leave you all…"

"Matilda, you're in no shape to fight and you'll need medical attention but since Chun-Nan is under attack, it will not be safe for you to get any here." said Kai sternly "And we need help, the Raiju Clan is too powerful for us all so we need you to get the help of the Royal Fighters."

Then suddenly, Conquering Storm sneaked up behind Master Kai and used a nerve-pinch on him to knock him out! Master Kai fell down to the ground and Conquering Storm glowered at him.

"You'd think a kung-fu warrior like him would know better then to divert his attention from the battle." she crooned "And now it's time to deal with you once and for all princess."

"Mushu, distract that witch while I escort Matilda out of here!" ordered Bladefeather, running away as fast as he could with the injured Matilda in his arms.

Mushu obeyed and he tripped Conquering Storm up with a swipe of his tail. Conquering Storm landed on her back and Mushu pinned her down by grabbing her neck with his hands. Conquering Storm wrestled with Mushu and tried to push the iguana off of herself. While Mushu kept Conquering Storm busy, Bladefeather ran through the village and looked for a man with a cart. Luckily he found one

and he screeched to a halt just in time to catch him. The cart man jumped in surprise at the sight of Bladefeather and the injured Princess Matilda that he was carrying in his arm.

"My good fellow, please take our wondrous princess out of here and deliver her to the home place of the Acorn Family." said Bladefeather.

"Certainly sir." said the cart man "Luckily I have a map to that place so I'll get her there in no time."

Bladefeather lay Matilda down on the cart and the cart man lifted up the handles of the cart, ready to pull away and take Matilda out of Chun-Nan.

"Safe journey my radiant little sunbeam." said Bladefeather.

"Good…luck Blade…feather…" panted Matilda, her injuries still hurting her dearly "And remember…no matter…where I am…I'll still be there…for…you…right there in…your heart."

"I know Matilda." said Bladefeather brightly "I will hopefully see you soon once your injuries start to recover and this nightmare finally ceases."

With that said, Bladefeather drew out a pair of daggers and ran back to join in the battle with the Raiju Ninjas. The cart man watched Bladefeather leave and he ran off, pulling the cart with him and taking Matilda out of Chun-Nan. He had a map for New Mobotropolis so he knew where he was going. It was going to be a long trek though as he was going there on foot but he knew some quicker routes to take so he'd get there faster. As for poor Matilda, her injuries eventually became too much for her and she passed out in the cart she lay in. She was now completely unconscious but still alive. And when she arrived at New Mobotropolis, she would have one heck of a story to tell the Royal Fighters. Would they be able to save Chun-Nan or were they going to be of no help to the country…?

And that's it for this arc! Now it's time to tune back into Heroes of Mobius to see what Sonic and friends think to all of this! Only...Sonic won't be able to help them thanks to Devion...

In the meantime, keep an eye out for the next Tales from Mobius arc which will star everybody's favourite future couple...Silver and Blaze! And there will be a Martian or two in the fray too...

So Erin D. and Arena Master No. 19, how was this arc for you two?

All's Fair in Warfare 1

Arc 15: All's Fair in Warfare

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 119-120

Part 1

Fate often had a way of being very cruel to some individuals. Fate was a force to be reckoned with as fate can strike at any moment without anyone knowing about it. Fate could be kind and fate could be cruel depending on certain outcomes. One of the unfortunate people to have a cruel fate was time travelling hero Silver the Hedgehog. He was a silver hedgehog with psychic powers and he came from a future Mobius. While the present is under control right now, the future was a complete wreck. Cities were destroyed and buildings had either crumbled or fallen into despair, roads were cracked or full of potholes and large lumps of concrete sticking up from the road, forests were bare and dead and lush grassland had been reduced to miserable wastelands. There were few signs of life with few individuals still alive and struggling to live their lives in this post-apocalyptic world. This was not Silver's idea of a perfect world. He strived to find a way of fixing the future and ever since he discovered time travel, he tried going back to the past to fix things. He joined up with Sonic the Hedgehog to retrieve the stolen Sol Emeralds* but he hadn't done anything to fix the past yet so the future remained the same.

Right now, Silver was sitting in a ragged chair with no springs left in it in a completely wrecked library and reading a book that was dirty, tattered and missing an awful lot of pages. The library was no longer a comfortable place to read books, all the shelves had fallen over and ripped, dirty, wrecked books littered the floor. The library looked more like a rubbish tip then a proper library. Silver had read many of the books even though he was yet to find a book with all its pages intact. The one he was reading right now contained information on Mobius' past and all its most memorable moments such as Dr.

Eggman's short lived conquest of the planet** and the infamous Devatron invasion***. Silver was reading a page that contained information about an event that Sonic had yet to witness. According to the book Silver was reading, the Martians invaded Mobius at one point in time. The pages about the Martian invasion were ripped or missing completely so Silver wasn't getting complete information about the supposed invasion. He read the last remaining page about the Martian invasion as hard as he could despite the fact some of the words were hard to read due to the pages being mucked up.

"Despite Sonic the Hedgehog's…val-i-ant efforts…" Silver read slowly to himself "…the Martians were too powerful and they defeated him and actually…succeeded in seizing Castle Acorn…"

And the page ended there. Silver read over it again and thought to himself. He put a finger to his lips in thought.

"According to this, the Martians were peace-hating freaks that loved to turn innocent worlds into war zones." he said aloud "Could those Martian freaks be responsible for the destruction of Mobius?"

He read the part about them seizing Castle Acorn again. He had no idea what happened next since the rest of the page was missing and there was nothing left of the Martian invasion in the book. But it all made sense. The Martians were too powerful for Sonic the Hedgehog to defeat and they succeeded in seizing Castle Acorn so after that, the Martians must have taken over Mobius and destroyed everything. Silver snapped the book shut and jumped to his feet.

"I've finally found out what's caused the destruction of my world." he claimed to himself "That Martian invasion must have been responsible for all this so I must go back in time and prevent them from ever coming here! But first I need to get Blaze."

Using his psychokinesis, he levitated off the floor and flew out of the library like a whizzing arrow. He headed to the one place he loved to visit and the place his only friend lived. The miserable remains of AngelIsland. AngelIsland once floated in the sky but the Master Emerald had been destroyed by whatever wrecked the future so AngelIsland fell into the ocean and caused a mass flooding that lasted several days. The villages on AngelIsland crumbled to pieces

thanks to the island falling but the shrine which the Master Emerald once sat remained intact. The only occupant of AngelIsland was Silver's only friend, Blaze the Cat. She is a guardian like Knuckles the Echidna only she guarded seven gems named Sol Emeralds which were like Chaos Emeralds only rectangular in shape. The Sol Emeralds had been stolen by a mouse like robot from another world but with help from Sonic and friends, Blaze had gotten them all back. The Sol Emeralds were insanely powerful and if they fell into the wrong hands, the future would be worse off then it already was. Blaze was catnapping (get it?) on the shrine right now. The Sol Emeralds sat neatly in a slab of rock that Blaze had built to give the Sol Emeralds somewhere to sit in so she didn't have to carry them around all the time. Silver arrived on AngelIsland and landed beside the sleeping Blaze. He gently shook her awake. Blaze yawned and stretched before getting up on her feet.

"Hrrum…Silver do you mind barging in on me when I'm trying to nap?" mumbled Blaze sleepily.

"Sorry Blaze." said Silver, looking at his feet "It's just; I think I've found out what's ruined our world."

"You have?" said Blaze with surprise "Let's hope you're right. So what do you think was the cause of all this?"

"I was reading a book about the history of Mobius and there was a page about an invasion that happened two hundred years ago." explained Silver "The invasion was a Martian invasion and according to the book, they love to turn innocent planets into a war zone so that invasion must be responsible for this devastation."

The friends sadly gazed into the horizon. They saw nothing but wastelands and dead trees that circled the ruined city of Nekronopolis on the shore.

"So you think some Martian invasion is the reason our world is like this?" said Blaze uncertainly "I dunno Silver, maybe Sonic stopped that invasion. If he managed to stop the Devatron invasion then a bunch of Martians should be no contest."

"We don't know that for sure." said Silver "For all we know, the

Martians just got lucky and defeated Sonic or maybe the Devatrons joined in with the Martians and both races destroyed Mobius."

"So I suggest you're going back in time to prevent this Martian invasion from happening?" asked Blaze.

"I am indeed." said Silver "Do you still have the Time Stone I found the other day?"

"Yes Silver, it's here." said Blaze, pulling a shiny orange jewel out of her pocket and handing it to Silver.

The shiny orange jewel was a Time Stone. Silver had found it some time ago but he and Blaze had no idea where it came from or who it once belonged to. All they knew was it was a Time Stone and they could use it for time travel. The Time Stone had a thin crack on it but Silver didn't think it mattered.

"Why don't you use your Super Warp Ring?" asked Blaze "Super Warp Rings are more reliable then those Time Stones."

"I don't have it on me right now." said Silver "So I may as well use the Time Stone now I have it."

"Do you know when you want to be?" asked Blaze "For all we know, that thing could take us right in the middle of the invasion or directly after it."

"I know when I want to be." said Silver "The Martian invasion began on May the 4th 2143 so if the Time Stone works, we should appear a day before it happens."

"And do you have a plan on how to stop the invasion?" asked Blaze.

"Not really." said Silver grimly "But I'll formulate one once we arrive."

He and Blaze held hands and nodded at each other. Silver, holding the stone in his hand, thrust his arm up and punched the air. He yelled at the top of his voice

"Chronos…CONTROL!"

The Time Stone flashed brightly and the dazzling light engulfed the two Mobians. Then with one enormous bright flash, they vanished into thin air. Wherever they would end up was a mystery but Silver prayed with all his might that he would end up in the right time zone and stop the so-called Martian invasion of Mobius from happening.

Green Gate, the planet of the Seedrians was once a happy luscious place teeming with bright colourful plant life and friendly residents. The Seedrians lived in undisturbed harmony for centuries and they had never been in a war…until this moment. They were at war with the peace-hating Martians. The war had been going on for months and neither side was gaining the upper hand. The Martians invaded the Seedrian planet in an attempt to wreck it due to how much peace disgusted them and the Seedrians were of no exception. The Martians were led by Marik's terrifying father, Grand Warlord Diablo and his mother Grand War Mistress Natasha. The Seedrians were led by Cosmo's parents Lucas and Earthia. Despite the Seedrian's peace loving nature, they had been dreading a war coming for centuries so they had secretly built some powerful weapons if ever they needed them and they certainly needed them right now. Every Seedrian child had been evacuated in order to save the race from total devastation should the Seedrians lose and the Martians had no idea where the children were so they couldn't destroy them.

As of this moment, Diablo was in the Supreme Command Spaceship and plotting his next insidious move. Diablo looked like a brute from a child's nightmare. He was seven feet tall and had biceps as hard as titanium. His armour was indestructible and coloured a brilliant gold colour. His armour consisted of an all round body plate with a glowing green gem in the centre, a chest plate with curved shoulder pads, two large curved structures on his back, a helmet with a spike on the top and two horns on the sides, a tunic, large golden boots and arm pieces with a small gem on the wrist section. He truly looked like someone who would win every arm wrestling match he competed in.

Diablo peered at the war table which had a map of the planet and several plastic figures in several places to mark important locations to attack. These locations contained important strike forces and

combat set ups. Diablo's evil mind worked away on his next evil plot to destroy the Seedrians once and for all. Despite the Martians' superior strength and tactical skills, this war still raged on and he couldn't understand why.

"We Martians are invincible." he muttered to himself in his booming voice "The only race we cannot defeat in battle are those blasted Devatrons so why haven't we defeated those wretched Seedrians yet?!"

Diablo peered closer at the war table.

"I had Squad AA attack a Seedrian strike force here." he pointed at the section of the map he was talking about "And we had SquadAB attack here." he pointed at another section of the map that marked an important strike team "And those Seedrians still aren't wiped out. They just come back on us with attacks just as strong and we lose an awful lot of important soldiers. How do they keep on coming no matter how many times we bomb their best strike forces and wipe them out? And how are they so difficult to defeat in battle? What am I overlooking?!"

He pounded the table in frustration.

"Do calm down dear." said a sexy voice that could tame the wildest of men "You won't think properly with an unsettled mind like that."

The voice belonged to Diablo's beloved wife Natasha. She was an extremely beautiful Martian and she was well known for it. She had gorgeous blue eyes, a nice curvy waist and thighs that could make any man drool in amazement. She wore a red strapless shirt that came to the chest and a silver flowing tunic. She had silver wristbands on her wrists, gold braces on her thighs and a tall headwear with a long flowing cape that flowed from the back and a red gem on the top. She wore small silver shoes. Diablo was very lucky to have married a Martian so beautiful and despite her beauty, she was just as evil and sadistic as the other Martians. Even female Martians were a force to be reckoned with.

"You're right Natasha darling." said Diablo, sitting down in a large chair that could be seen as his throne "We Martians think better

when we're calm and relaxed."

"Like you honey I wonder why we haven't defeated those disgusting plant creatures yet." said Natasha, scrunching her face up in disgust over the thought of the Seedrians "We should have defeated them the moment we arrived on this planet and that was months ago!"

"I know Natasha." said Diablo "There must be something we're missing here."

"I know one thing though." said Natasha "We horribly underestimated those Seedrian freaks because they've put up a fight so good we're even sided."

"If we don't come up with a plan guaranteed to grant us victory this war will go on forever." grumbled Diablo "I do wish my son didn't abandon the fight abruptly just to find those stupid Seedrian children. He was a very good thinker for someone his age. I wonder what's taking the little beast so long. He's been gone for days!"

"I'm sure our son is fine Diablo." Natasha assured her husband soothingly "Marik's made of strong stuff you know so have faith in him."

"I do." blurted Diablo "It's just, he's been gone for so long I'm sure something terrible has happened to him."

"If something terrible has happened to Marik he would have informed us already." said Natasha "Now stop worrying and relax yourself! We need your brain nice and relaxed so you can think properly."

"I'll never be able to relax." said Diablo grimly "There's too much on my mind for me to relax. Even meditating doesn't work. I'll have to defer to my beloved brother for a well formulated plan."

"You don't mean Count Drago do you?" gasped Natasha.

"Of course I mean Count Drago you stupid witch!" snapped Diablo "Is there a problem with that?!"

"Not really." said Natasha "It's just that guy gives me the creeps. His

voice makes me shiver and that horrible stare in his eyes make my heart feel faint."

"Well you can stay here Natasha babe." said Diablo "I will consort Drago alone."

"Very well handsome." said Natasha "I hope your meeting goes well."

Diablo nodded and left the room, leaving Natasha to oversee the war efforts.

Diablo wondered down to the lower floors of the ship and headed for Section 51. Section 51 was where his brother Count Drago resided. Count Drago made his plans in Section 51 and unlike other Martians, he worked in secret and only came out of Section 51 if he was needed in battle or if he was requested to come up and meet Diablo. Diablo arrived at Section 51 and he walked through the door.

"Hello dear brother." said Diablo brightly.

"I left implicit instructions I was not to be disturbed at this point." said Count Drago crossly "I'm thinking long and hard right now."

His voice was medium pitched and very sinister. He often frightened his victims with that voice. Count Drago was the same height as Diablo only he was nowhere near as broad and stocky. In fact he was very slim in comparison. He wore a black outfit with a black tunic and black boots. He wore a brown belt and a brown cape that came down to his ankles and it was held together by silver clasps and a chain. He wore a silver helmet with a tall sharp spike on top. The left half of his face was robotical and his left eye was an emotionless red optic that glowed.

"Don't talk to your Warlord like that Count Drago!" snarled Diablo "You treat me with respect remember?!"

"I deeply apologize for my unneeded outburst." said Count Drago, bowing before his brother "I'm just angered at you bursting in on me while I requested to be left alone."

"I'm sorry about that Count." said Diablo "I was just wondering what

plans you had that could help us win this stupid war once and for all."

"I do have one idea." said the Count "But I'm not sure if it'll work."

"What plan is that Drago?" asked Diablo desperately.

"I thought we could pretend to surrender to the wretched Seedrians and gain their trust somehow." the Count explained "Then once we have them off guard, we destroy Dark Oak and Earthia. Once they're destroyed, the Seedrians won't have a chance against us."

"So why don't you think it'll work?" asked Diablo.

"Because I don't know how to gain the trust of the very race we have been in conflict with over the long combat heavy months that have come and passed." said Drago "We cannot just surrender to them and expect them to be content with that. We will have to do something that's very pleasing for them in order to win such hard to gain trust but I haven't the faintest idea on how I will accomplish that."

"We'll have to rack our brains for this." said Diablo grimly "I wish Marik was here. He's a good thinker, I bet he'd come up with something."

"I wish my nephew was here too." said Count Drago "But we have to deal with the obvious fact he isn't. We'll have to come up with this plan alone."

"I'm sure we'll think of a way to win the Seedrian's trust." said Diablo "It'll only be a matter of time until we find out how. I'm thankful for you sharing your plans with me Count Drago and for now I'll leave you in peace to think up some more devious schemes."

"I bid you farewell brother." said Count Drago, bowing to Diablo "And hopefully we shall have the good fortune of winning this irritable conflict with the peace sucking Seedrians."

Diablo nodded and smiled wickedly. He turned around and left Section 51, leaving Count Drago to think to himself. The Count sat down and started racking his brain for an idea on how to win the

Seedrian's trust.

"I'll come up with a way." the Count said with determination "If I keep using my marvellous brain I'll come up with a sneaky and subtle way to throw those fools off guard."

A bright flash appeared from nowhere and Silver and Blaze materialized into view.

"Ah, here we are!" said Silver proudly "Mobius in the year 2143 and a whole day before the invasion begins."

Blaze looked around. Strange, this didn't look like Mobius. The trees had been knocked down, the grass had been scorched and there was the stench of rotting flesh from dead bodies in the air. Not to mention there was the sound of guns and cannons going off in the distance. This looked more like a war zone and she didn't remember Mobius looking like that when she and Silver chased that Mouse Bot into the past before.

"Um…Silver?" said Blaze slowly "I don't think this is Mobius."

"Don't be silly Blaze, of course it's Mobius!" snorted Silver "What makes you think this isn't Mobius?"

"Well for starters, it looks like a bomb hit it and second there's a war going on over there and it doesn't look like it's between Sonic and Dr. Eggman." said Blaze, pointing into the distance.

Silver squinted in the direction Blaze was pointing at. He couldn't quite see what was going on so he and Blaze had to get closer to the scene to see what was happening. Silver and Blaze ran towards the supposed fight and came to a halt at a hilltop. They peered down and saw a terrifying sight. They were now witnessing the war between the Seedrians and the Martians. Laser blasts were flying everywhere and there were many weapons on the battlefield. The Martian side had walking gun turrets, flying saucers and enormous tanks that could squash a two storey house flat with one tread. The Seedrian side had flying flower shaped jets, jeeps that were armed

to the teeth with guns and cannons on wheels. Some soldiers were fighting hand to hand combat and they carried weapons ranging from axes to swords to laser rifles to whips and maces. Both sides were fighting fiercely and ferociously but neither seemed to be gaining an edge on each other. Silver felt sick watching all this and Blaze turned away in disgust.

"We're defiantly not on Mobius." said Blaze grimly "The war between the Mobians and Eggman is nowhere near as bad as this war. Where are we?"

"I think I know where we are." choked Silver.

"I hope you do." said Blaze sternly "So where are we?"

"According to the book I read." said Silver "The Martians had a war with a race of plant like beings called Seedrians. The war lasted for months but I don't know who won since the book was missing that information."

"Well something must have happened to make the Martians target Mobius at one point." said Blaze.

"Either the Seedrians won and the Martians left to target Mobius or the Seedrians lost and the Martians targeted Mobius next." thought Silver "Either way, I'm not getting caught up in this horror. We're getting outta here right now."

"Why didn't that stupid stone take us to Mobius in the year 2143?" asked Blaze.

"Like you said before, Time Stones aren't very reliable." said Silver "And since this one's cracked, it won't work as well as the Super Warp Ring so it obviously got the location I wanted wrong."

"Let's hope it works for us this time." said Blaze "I want to get out of here and back to our dimension so we can use your Super Warp Ring to get to Mobius in the year 2143 instead of that lousy Time Stone."

"Fingers crossed it works properly." said Silver, crossing his fingers.

He held the stone over his head and yelled

"Chronos…CONTRO…"

Before he could finish he was blasted in the back by something and sent hurtling down the hill like a rolling ball. The Time Stone flew out of his hand and smashed to pieces against a fallen charred tree. Silver came to a halt at the bottom of the hill.

"Silver!" cried Blaze.

"Raise your hands miss!" snarled a voice from behind.

Blaze suddenly felt the sharp cold steel of a gun barrel in her back. Blaze didn't panic, she remained calm and she slowly raised her hands. The thing pointing the gun at her was a Martian soldier. He was dressed in green combat fatigues and his face was concealed by a helmet with a black visor.

"What are you, you freak?" growled the Martian "You're not a Seedrian!"

"I am a Mobian." said Blaze calmly "And I am going to make you pay for shooting my friend!"

She turned around sharply and blasted the Martian in the face with a jet of flames from the palm of her hands. The Martian squealed as he was engulfed with flames. The Martian ran away as quick as he could and Blaze stopped shooting fire at him. Now the Martian was gone, Blaze ran down the hill to see to Silver. The poor hedgehog was unconscious but alive. Blaze saw the broken pieces of the Time Stone that lay beside the fallen tree it had stricken when Silver fell down the hill after being blasted. Blaze picked up the pieces and stared at them helplessly.

"No!" she cried "How can we get back home now?"

"Mmmuuummmffff….I'll save the future…" murmured Silver sleepily.

He was beginning to come around. Silver sat up and rubbed his head weakly. Blaze was relieved to see Silver was OK. Silver opened his eyes and looked at Blaze.

"What happened?" he asked her.

"You were shot in the back by something." said Blaze "I don't know what it was but I scared it off with my fire attacks."

"I bet it was a Martian." said Silver "Seedrians are supposed to be friendly according to what I've read."

"Whatever it was, it doesn't matter now." said Blaze "What matters now is how do we get home now the Time Stone is broken?"

She showed Silver the broken pieces of the orange gemstone. Silver gasped in horror.

"How did the stone break?" asked Silver.

"It must have hit that tree after you fell down the hill." suggested Blaze, taking note of the charred fallen tree some of the pieces lay by.

"Well that's just great!" groaned Silver "We're stuck here forever! We're never gonna save the future now!"

Blaze's ears drooped back in despair. They were trapped on this strange world and in the middle of a war now. It seemed hopeless for Silver and Blaze now. Then suddenly the sounds of guns clocking filled their ears. The Martian Blaze had scared off didn't just run away in fear, it had run away to get reinforcements. There were now ten Martian soldiers all with their guns loaded and itching to pull the trigger. Silver and Blaze stood back to back and glared at the Martians.

"Raise your hands strangers!" ordered one soldier.

The two Mobians refused to move.

"I said raise your hands!" snarled the soldier.

"No!" cried Silver.

Using his psychokinesis, he yanked all their guns out of their hands and threw them away. The Martians were amazed by that sudden

magical act. They had never seen a creature with psychic powers before. The Martians tried to run away but Blaze stopped them by surrounding them with a circle of fire. The Martians yelped and leaped back away from the fire. They faced the angry hedgehog and cat fearfully.

"W-w-what do y-y-you two s-s-savages want?" whimpered one of the soldiers.

"Who are you?" demanded Silver.

"W-w-we're M-M-Martians." stammered the soldier "W-w-why d-does th-th-that m-matter to you?"

"Just wondering." said Silver "Why are you trying to attack us? We haven't done anything to you!"

"We don't respect other life forms!" yelled a soldier with a very masculine voice "Only Martian life matters!"

"And I bet you two are spies for the Seedrians!" declared another soldier with strong a British accent "You obviously aren't on our side since you attacked us!"

"We aren't working for the Seedrians." said Silver crossly "But I wouldn't mind in helping them defeat you wretched vermin!"

"Oh that does it!" snarled the masculine voiced soldier "Kill him boys!"

The soldiers lunged for Silver but Silver merely used his psychokinesis to stop them in their tracks. The soldiers yelped as they were halted by psychic energy.

"Incredible!" squeaked the British accented soldier "How do you do that stranger?"

"I'm just special." sneered Silver, a big smirk on his face.

He thrust his arms forward and sent the Martians flying backwards. The Martians were hurtled through the circle of fire and into the ground and sent tumbling backwards.

"Let's get outta here!" cried Blaze.

She grabbed Silver by the arm and ran off as fast as she could run with him in tow. Blaze's speed was almost on par with Sonic's so the Martians would never catch them now.

"Where are you going?" asked Silver as Blaze rocketed through the war torn meadows.

"We are going to find the Seedrian in charge and see if we can join them in battling the Martians." answered Blaze "Hopefully, they'll have a way for us to get home."

"That's wishful thinking Blaze but it might just work." said Silver "I'd love to help the Seedrians defeat those monsters!"

Blaze continued to run with Silver holding on to her hand tightly. Blaze had no idea where she was going but she knew she's find the Seedrian in charge sooner or later. She had only just met the Martians and already she hated their guts out so she was keen to help the Seedrians win the war against them. Silver was just as keen. Hopefully if he helped the Seedrians win the war, the Martians would be defeated and they would never invade Mobius and ruin his world. Or wouldn't they…?

"So let me get this straight?" said Count Drago as the battered, burnt and bruised soldiers stood before him, cowering in fear "You came across two strange creatures and using psychic and fire powers, they completely whupped you?"

"Yes Count." said one soldier.

"Who are the strange creatures?" demanded Count Drago fiercely.

He seized the lead soldier by the collar and hoisted him up to his height. The soldier gulped hard.

"Th…they were a silver spiky thing and a purple cat woman thing." whimpered one of the soldier "And the cat woman thing said she was a Mobian. I have no idea what she…meant…by…that…

though." he squeaked as Count Drago's grip tightened and his organic eye narrowed into a terrifying glare.

The Count dropped the soldier and sighed loudly.

"The finest squad I have to offer and they get sorely defeated by a couple of total strangers!" he grumbled "Can any more misfortune strike upon me?"

One of the soldiers opened his mouth to speak.

"Don't answer that if you know what's good for you!" snapped Drago.

The soldier closed his mouth. Drago began to pace the room in thought.

"Those "Mobian" strangers are definitely not a race I'm familiar with but they must be dangerous if their power exceeds that of ten Martian soldiers all highly beefed up and armed to the teeth." said Count Drago "They must be working for the wretched Seedrians!" he slammed his fist on his other hand "They must be captured and once they've been captured, I will take it upon myself to dissect them bit by bit to see how they work!"

"They're not robots sir." said the British accented soldier.

"Shut up when I'm pondering!" snapped the Count "Now, do any of you know where these so called Mobians are?"

"Not right now, no." said the masculine voiced Martian "But I'm willing to bet they're heading to the Seedrian palace to tell Dark Oak and Earthia about what they've just done to us."

"In that case I shall take it upon myself to kindly request permission to sneak into the Seedrian palace and seize those Mobians." said the Count "You ten rest yourselves for now and make sure this area remains as it is."

"Yes sir!" said the soldiers in unison.

Count Drago turned around and walked out of the room. He headed up to the upper decks of the ship where Diablo and Natasha

resided. It was a long way up due to Section 51 being so far down below. Count Drago came to the door and knocked on it.

"Who's there?" boomed Diablo's voice from the other side of the door.

"It is me, Count Drago." Drago answered.

"Come in then." said Diablo.

The door opened and Count Drago walked inside. Diablo sat in his throne staring at the window while Natasha stood behind him, also staring out of the window. The moment she saw Count Drago, she tried her best not to shiver. Diablo got up from his throne and turned to face his sinister brother.

"So what brings you up here then?" asked Diablo.

"A bunch of my soldiers were ambushed by two strange life forms called Mobians." informed Drago "Those strangers must be dangerous and I've decided to take it upon myself to go after those Mobians and capture them so they will be unable to help our filthy enemies."

Diablo put a hand to his head in thought.

"What on Mars is a Mobian?" he wondered.

"I dunno darling but I bet it's a race that must be terminated." said Natasha wickedly "If they're attacking us they must be helping the enemy so we must destroy them."

"Agreed Natasha." said Diablo "Count Drago, you have my permission to led an abduction party and don't come back to me until those Mobians are captured!"

"I shall not let you down my liege." said Count Drago with a tone of fierce loyalty in his voice "I shall return to this ship with the Mobians in hand."

"Good." boomed Diablo "Otherwise you'll have to be severely punished should you fail…"

The three Martians were interrupted by a sudden bright flash that appeared in the ship. The flash lasted a few seconds and then none other then Marik the Martian materialized into existence. He still had the emerald cluster fragment he'd stolen from Dr. Eggman during the Devatron invasion**** and he'd used it to Chaos Control here. Marik glared at the purple fragment he held in his metallic claws.

"That chunk of Chaos Emerald is so unreliable!" he grumbled "Takes me five Chaos Controls to finally get where I want to be!"

"Marik?" gasped Diablo and Natasha in unison.

"Nephew?" gasped Count Drago.

Marik looked up from the emerald and the moment he caught sight of his parents, a big smile appeared on his face.

"Mother! Father!" he cried "I'm home at last!"

He ran happily into his parent's arms and they all had a group hug. Count Drago just stood and watched like a sinister gargoyle.

"Just the kind of event to brighten this dark day." he said to himself "My brilliant nephew finally returns after such a long time away from the battlefield."

"Marik my son! You've returned at long last!" cried Diablo happily "Where have you been?"

"You know that I left the battlefield to chase down the evacuating Seedrian children?" said Marik.

Diablo and Natasha nodded.

"Well I chased one of the daughters of Earthia and Dark Oak to a planet called Mobius." explained Marik "That planet is absolutely hideous I'm telling you! It's almost as bad as the Seedrian Homeworld we're on now!"

"So what took you so long?" asked Natasha "Surely you can't have taken this long just to kill one Seedrian child?"

"I've been in heavy conflict with the native species of Mobius." explained Marik "The Mobians are tough little fighters and their strongest is this one."

He pulled a picture of Sonic the Hedgehog out of his jacket pocket and showed it to Natasha. Natasha's face scrunched up in disgust.

"What a hideous creature!" she spat "I wouldn't mind squishing this one flat!"

"Sonic is a force to be reckoned with mother." warned Marik "Sonic can run extremely fast, even faster then me, and his attacks are incredibly powerful too. Not to mention he has friends that provide good help in battle. He and his friends have just recently defeated the Devatrons, including their leader."

"Well that was pretty much inevitable due to how arrogant those idiot Devatrons are." declared Diablo "We won't fall to the Mobians though, we Martians are better then those stinkin' Devatrons! Still, those Mobians must be ones to look out for if they beat Devion himself."

"They are ones to look out for dad." said Marik "I've had a hard time with them. Look what they did to me!"

He showed his parents his metallic hand. Natasha shrieked with shock and Diablo's blood began to boil like stew in a cauldron. Even Count Drago, who is usually deadpan, was shocked at Marik's robotical hand.

"What did those savages do to you?!" shrieked Natasha.

"Sonic stole my Energy Diamond and used it against me and sent me flying off a cliff." explained Marik "I crippled my hand for life so in order to get it working again, I installed cybernetics into it. I like my new hand though since I now have electric attacks and I'll be able to scratch people oh so marvellously."

Diablo's rage was uncontrollable now. He exploded into anger.

"THOSE SAVAGES CRIPPLED YOUR HAND FOR LIFE?" he thundered "OH I WILL MAKE THOSE VERMIN PAY SO DEARLY

SO HELP ME I WILL!"

"Diablo please! Calm down!" cried Natasha.

"DON'T TELL ME TO BE CALM NATASHA!" roared Diablo "THOSE MOBIAN FREAKS HAVE TAKEN MY SON'S HAND AND I WON'T LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT! I'LL MAKE THEM PAY FOR THIS!"

"Well dad, after we defeat the Seedrians, I propose we target Mobius next." said Marik "We'll succeed where the Devatrons failed and destroy those cretins!"

"You got that right Marik!" boomed Diablo "I accept your proposal without a moment's hesitance!"

"I'm equally as willing to aid you in the destruction of those fatuous vermin you call "Mobians" dear nephew." purred Count Drago "Speaking of which, two Mobians are here on this very planet at this very moment so we can see what they're made of by battling those two."

"What?!" cried Marik "There are Mobians here?! But how?!"

"I have no idea but I'll make sure they die oh so painfully." said Count Drago.

"What did the Mobians look like?" asked Marik.

"The soldiers say one is a silver spiky individual with powers of the psychic kind and the other is a purple cat woman person with pyrokinetic attributes." said Count Drago "Have you crossed the paths of those two on your time on Mobius Marik?"

Marik thought for a moment.

"I believe I've met those two." Marik mused to himself "I was trying to find their so-called Sol Emeralds and the silver one knocked me out and disabled my jet shoes*****. I wish to make them suffer for this indignity they've caused me!"

"They disabled your jet shoes as well?!" blurted Diablo "Well I'm

gonna have to get you a new pair then before we go and face those two strangers that have arrived here."

"Hey I've just had a brilliant idea!" cried Natasha, snapping her fingers.

"You have mother? Let's hear it!" said Marik eagerly.

"Diablo told me Count Drago had a plan on how to defeat the Seedrians." explained Natasha "The plan was, we pretend to surrender and gain the Seedrian's trust and once they lower their guard, we will have them!"

"So what's your brilliant idea then?" asked Diablo.

"We do what Drago suggested." said Natasha "And then we lie to the Seedrians saying their daughter landed on the planet called Mobius and was murdered by the Mobians. And if there are two here, we could capture them, hand them to Earthia and Dark Oak and tell them they were the ones who murdered her! That's bound to gain their trust!"

"Natasha you're brilliant!" cried Diablo, giving her a quick kiss "But we don't know which one of Earthia's daughters is on Mobius!"

"I do." said Marik "Their youngest daughter Cosmo is on Mobius."

"Then we will lie to Earthia saying the two Mobians that have mysteriously ended up here murdered Cosmo." said Natasha "Once they demand their capture, we shall do it ourselves in order to win their trust. The plan is fool proof, there's no way we're going to lose this battle now!"

"Agreed." said Diablo "We shall go out there and pretend to surrender now. Who's got the white flag?"

"I have." said Count Drago, pulling it out of his cloak pocket "Although I'm uncertain why I have it even though we never use it."

"Excellent." said Diablo "Let's put the plan into action…"

The battle continued fiercely. Seedrians and Martians were blasting each other to bits. And as usual, neither side was gaining the upper hand. It was an entirely even sided battle. The Seedrians were led by Cosmo's father Lucas who in battle went under the alias Dark Oak in order to sound more terrifying to his enemies, not that the name Dark Oak bothered the Martians the slightest. Dark Oak wore formidable looking body armour that was just as strong as Diablo's and it made him look very intimidating too. His armour was various shades of purple with pointed shoulder pads, pointed hip pads, sharp claws, a helmet with a singular green eye and two spikes sticking up from either side of it, a green orb in the chest section and two tattered capes that clung to his shoulders. Cosmo's mother Earthia remained at home since she refused to take part in such violence. Dark Oak pulled out his weapon which was a long golden sword that sparkled like a hug diamond.

"I will wipe out these pathetic Martians once and for all!" he declared, his voice sounded robotical thanks to his helmet "Men, get ready to advance!"

"Yes sir!" said a squad of soldiers.

They were armed with wheeled cannons that were almost impossible to destroy. This advance would certainly punch a giant hole into the Martian army if it succeeded. The Martian's walking gun turrets were often a dangerous obstacle for the wheeled cannons due to the fact they blasted the vulnerable wheels off which rendered the cannons unable to move and vulnerable to attack and the cannons were far too heavy to push with out the wheels attached so the Seedrians pushing the cannons ended up vulnerable too. Dark Oak luckily, had seen a way around this thorny problem. The cannons now had wheel guards so the wheels couldn't be blasted off so the walking gun turrets would have a harder job stopping this advance. Dark Oak and his men advanced on the attacking Martians with the cannons in tow. They made a low rumbling noise as their giant wheels moved through the war torn earth. Two walking gun turrets aimed their cannons at Dark Oak and attempted to fire but the wheeling cannons the Seedrians had fired first and the gun turrets were blown to smithereens.

"Those Martians won't be able to stop us now." boasted Dark Oak

"The wheel guards we installed on the cannons will protect the once vulnerable wheels from the Martian's cannon fire. Our advance will wipe the whole Martian operation up front out in a matter of seconds!"

The wheeled cannons continued their advance on the Martians. The Martian soldiers out on the land instantly began to run away as the Seedrian cannons came towards them. The giant Martian tanks stayed put and aimed their cannons at the Seedrian's advance. A squadron of jeeps suddenly appeared from behind the cannons and they surrounded the tanks. Normally the tank drivers wouldn't have been bothered about the jeeps since their treads could squish a two story building flat so a jeep would be no contest but the jeeps came in big numbers and they often aimed for the unprotected treads with their many guns and they had so many guns the treads were wrecked at the speed of piranhas devouring a prey. Since Diablo wasn't very bright, he hadn't been bothered on updating the tanks with tread guards so the tank treads were once again, completely destroyed by the onslaught of firepower from the heavily armed jeeps. The tanks were unable to move; only their cannons were functional. Desperate to wipe out the advance, the tank drivers aimed their cannons at the wheeled cannons and they attempted to fire but the Seedrian jets interfered by bombarding them with bombs. The tanks were reduced to smithereens in sheer seconds. Dark Oak's squad continued to push forward with any resistance from the Martians being destroyed swiftly by the wheeled cannons. The squad suddenly stopped pressing forward. Dark Oak had halted them in their tracks. Something had caught the Seedrian leader's attention. The heavy and relentless gunfire from the Martians had suddenly silenced into nothingness. Tanks remained still and jets didn't fly over the battlefield dropping bombs as they went. Diablo and Marik had appeared on the battlefield but instead of brandishing weapons and getting ready to attack, Diablo had Marik sitting on his shoulder and Marik was waving a white flag. This suspicious act made Dark Oak stare hard at the Martians. Could this be…?

"Attention Seedrians." boomed Diablo, his loud voice echoed around the battlefield "We surrender. You have well and truly beaten us."

Every single Seedrian erupted into a triumphant cheer that rang

around the battlefield like a thousand ringing bells. Dark Oak didn't seem to buy this act.

"Silence!" he bellowed.

The Seedrians stopped cheering and fell into a solemn silence. Dark Oak marched up to Diablo and stared squarely into his eyes. Diablo towered over Dark Oak but the Seedrian leader wasn't intimidated at all.

"How do we know you really are surrendering and you aren't just pretending to surrender to trick us?" snarled Dark Oak, his robotical voice ringing through Diablo's ears.

"Would I be waving a white flag if we weren't surrendering?!" snapped Marik, waving the flag in Dark Oak's face.

"No you wouldn't." said Dark Oak grimly "But we demand more proof then just a silly white flag that you've surrendered."

"You want proof?" chuckled Diablo "Then you've got it!"

He turned around to face his Martian soldiers and bellowed at them.

"Soldiers, fall back and get into your spaceships!" he roared "And make sure you pack up all your weapons and combat equipment before we leave!"

"Yes sir, Diablo sir!" cried the soldiers in unison.

Diablo had told them the plan in secret so the soldiers knew what was going on and they kept up the act by falling back and running to their spaceships. For a few moments there was a tremendous stampede of retreating soldiers and the battlefield was surrounded with the sound of thundering feet. Soon the only Martians left on the battlefield were Diablo and Marik. Dark Oak was surprised at this.

"Is that enough proof for you Oakey Cokey?" sneered Diablo.

"I am convinced you've surrendered." said Dark Oak slowly "I'm glad you freaks have finally realized we're too much of a match for you. You would have saved a lot of trouble if you didn't start this stupid

war just because we crave for peace."

"Yeah we would have wouldn't we?" said Diablo, winking at Marik who was still on his shoulder. Marik winked back at him.

"I do hope you aren't too furious with your loss." said Dark Oak "Because I'm in no mood to fight you right now."

"No we're not furious at all." fibbed Diablo "We will go back to Mars and laugh at our stupidity!"

"At least you won't ruin my Homeworld anymore." said Dark Oak, surveying the war torn landscape that surrounded them "Now this war is over, I can give the good news to the women and then we can retrieve our children."

"I'm afraid there's one you won't find." said Marik, hopping off Diablo's shoulder and standing before the well armoured Seedrian.

"What do you mean?" asked Dark Oak.

"I chased your daughter Cosmo and sent her crashing on a planet called Mobius." explained Marik "Mobius is a savage place full of savage beings called Mobians. After they found Cosmo, they devoured her in an instant and left behind nothing but her bare bones and I should know because I've witnessed this horror with my own eyes."

If Dark Oak wasn't wearing a helmet, you'd see a pool of fire in his eyes. He clenched his claws and his fists shook.

"Mine and Earthia's youngest daughter is dead?!" he shrieked "And she was killed by a race of beings called Mobians?!"

"Oh yes." lied Marik "Cosmo didn't stand a chance against those savages. I've been in battle with the Mobians and look what they've done to my hand."

He showed Dark Oak his metallic hand. Dark Oak stared at the hand with fascination. Those Mobians must be deadly if they've managed to give Marik a robot hand and Martians are tough.

"How did that happen?" asked Dark Oak.

"They chucked me off a cliff and I crippled my hand for life so I had to install cybernetics into it to get it working again." said Marik "Those Mobians are monsters and they must pay for your daughter's tragic death."

"Why do you care about my daughter's death?!" snarled Dark Oak, slashing at Marik angrily "You monsters should be thrilled by that!"

"We've surrendered." said Diablo "And in order to make up for our appalling behaviour and this pointless war we've taken it upon ourselves to inform you of your daughter's death and offer to bring the Mobians to justice just for you."

"If you do that then you'll be on the way to reforming yourselves in my eyes." said Dark Oak "I never would have expected this from a Martian. I guess losing this war is giving you a change in personality eh?"

"It is indeed." lied Marik "We were fools to hate peace so we've decided from now on, we shall not harm another peace loving creature."

"That's good to know." said Dark Oak "Now do you know where this "Mobius" is so I can take some men there to destroy the Mobians?"

"Sure I do." said Marik "But me and the Martians will do it ourselves thank you. As a matter of fact, there are two Mobians on this planet right now."

"There are?!" roared Dark Oak, pulling out his golden sword and swinging it madly "Where?!"

"Somewhere." said Marik "I don't know how they got here but I know they're deadly. Some Martians attacked them but they were defeated so we shall double our efforts in bringing them down."

"Especially since according to Marik, the two Mobians here are the ones that killed Cosmo." added Diablo.

Marik smiled at his dad and Diablo smiled back. They had done

exactly as Natasha had suggested and blamed the two Mobians that had somehow gotten here for Cosmo's nonexistent death. Dark Oak got even angrier.

"The two Mobians that are mysteriously here are the ones that killed Cosmo?" he growled "Then you'd better capture them so we can bring them into justice or else!"

"We shall try our hardest Dark Oak." said Diablo "Those Mobians will be yours to deal with once we capture them."

"Very well." said Dark Oak, turning to leave "It's almost impossible to believe you're going to the trouble of doing this for us."

"It's almost impossible to believe we were having a bloody conflict a moment ago and now we're allies." said Diablo, snickering "Fate has a weird course sometimes doesn't it?"

Dark Oak sniffed and then walked away, his tattered capes blowing in the wind behind him. The Seedrian soldiers marched after him, taking their weapons away with them. After the Seedrians were out of earshot, Diablo and Marik erupted into laughter.

"All too easy!" cackled Diablo.

"The plan was brilliantly executed!" crowed Marik "It also helps that Dark Oak isn't very bright! Those Seedrian twits will trust us forever and then we can strike them at the most unexpected moment!"

Diablo pulled out a walkie-talkie and switched it on.

"Natasha honey are you there?" asked Diablo.

"Yes hunky chops I'm here." came Natasha's sexy voice from the other side of the walkie-talkie "Have the morons fallen for our cunning plan?"

"They have dear and they've requested us to capture the two Mobians Count Drago told us about." said Diablo, a big wicked smile on his face "You and your men may go and search for them now and do not fail me otherwise you'll be spending a month in the dungeons!"

"Sure thing Diablo." sighed Natasha, clearly not bothered by the threat "See you when we get back. Love you."

She switched off. Diablo put the walkie-talkie away.

"I can always rely on your mother for this kind of operation Marik." said Diablo "I expect she'll have those two Mobians in no time."

"Agreed." said Marik with a wicked grin on his face "I'll enjoy watching those to suffer as they disabled my jet shoes and made me have to take it slow! Just a pity one of them isn't Sonic the Hedgehog. I want to see him suffer the worst!"

"He'll suffer at our hands Marik." sneered Diablo "When we target Mobius, Sonic will scream for mercy when we're finished with him!"

Marik smiled and wiggled his shiny claws. Even though it would have been better if the Devatrons had taken care of the Mobians for him, he and the Martians could take care of them once they'd finished on Greengate. Right now, the Martians were going to destroy the Seedrians thanks to Drago and Natasha's beautiful plan that was being executed right now…

"Blaze can't we take a rest now?" asked Silver tiredly "We've been running for hours on end and we haven't found anybody."

Blaze sighed in annoyance and skidded to a halt. She sat down on the ground and Silver sat beside her. Silver surveyed the war torn land that seemed to stretch for miles on end. The war had clearly made a long lasting impact on the planet. Trees had been reduced to splinters and charred wood and the grass had been reduced to ruined earth and soil. It made Silver sad to think that if Cosmo ever came home she would come home to this mess. Silver had imagined the war between the Seedrians and the Martians ever since he read about it but he never imagined it would be this bad.

"Can you believe those Martians?" said Blaze angrily "I bet this world was fabulous and peaceful and now it's been reduced to an endless stretch of wasteland as far as the eye can see!"

"I never imagined it looking this bad." said Silver gloomily "I feel sad about the fact if Sonic's friend Cosmo ever returned home this is what she would return to. Not a nice way to welcome her back I say."

"I can almost imagine the poor girl's reaction." said Blaze "I'd be shocked if I returned home and it looked like a war zone."

"Speaking of the war, doesn't it occur to you that we're in total silence now?" Silver suddenly said "And I can't see a Martian anywhere."

Blaze squinted into the distance and surely enough, saw that Silver was right. The Martians were nowhere to be seen. And the Seedrians appeared to be marching home.

"The Martians aren't here and the Seedrians are falling back." Blaze mused to herself "This can only mean one thing…"

"That the war is over and the Seedrians have won?" put in Silver.

"That's exactly what I was going to say." said Blaze "Well that's lucky for us, we don't have to get involved after all."

"But that doesn't change the fact we're stuck here." said Silver "We still need a way of getting out of here."

"The only catch is we don't have a way of getting out of here and I'm uncertain if anyone here has a way of time travelling." said Blaze "If only I brought a Sol Emerald or two!"

Suddenly, Silver's ears pricked up. He could hear a faint humming sound coming from the distance. Blaze could hear it too. Silver and Blaze turned to their left and saw an oncoming hover saucer piloted by Natasha Martian. She had six soldiers with her all armed with net guns. The saucer stopped and Natasha stepped out of it. Silver and Blaze stood their ground in battle ready stances.

"Who are you?" demanded Silver.

Natasha gave Silver a chilling chuckle.

"If you must know little boy, I am Natasha Martian." said Natasha "And we have been requested to capture you and your pretty kitty friend so make this easy on yourselves and don't make any attempt to resist."

"Well my name is Silver the Hedgehog and this is my friend Blaze the Cat." said Silver, his hands glowing with psychic energy.

"We will not allow you to capture us so easily!" growled Blaze, her hands alit with flames "If you want us, you'll have to fight us!"

"Oooh, I love a little fight before capture." purred Natasha "Soldiers, fire!"

The six soldiers obeyed and fired their net guns at Silver and Blaze. Six rope nets hurtled towards the two Mobians. Blaze singed them all to ashes with one flick of fire from her fingertips. Natasha's eyes widened in surprise at that amazing fetish. Then Silver used his psychokinesis to halt the soldiers. They couldn't move whatsoever; they were firmly fixed to the spot by Silver's psychic energy. Then with a thrust of the arms, Silver sent the soldiers flying backwards and falling onto their backs. Natasha was even more amazed by that then Blaze's fire power.

"Incredible!" she cried "How do you two do that?"

"We're just special I guess." said Silver "Now Natasha, why are you trying to capture us?"

"Oh really little boy!" giggled Natasha dryly "Where's the fun in telling you that? You'll find out soon enough once we deliver you to the Seedrians."

Silver raised a suspicious eyebrow at the female Martian.

"Deliver us to the Seedrians?" he said with a notable tone of confusion in his voice "Why would you do something like that? You hate the Seedrians! You're at war with them!"

"Not anymore." said Natasha "We've surrendered to them."

"So why are you delivering us to them?" asked Blaze "What do they

want us for?"

Natasha didn't answer her. Instead she whipped out her terrible weapons which were spiked nunchakus and lunged at them at blinding speed. Female Martians were far more agile then the big bulky male Martians and Natasha was no exception. She lunged at them so fast she knocked Silver and Blaze over in one fell swoop. The Mobians fell on their backs and groaned. Natasha began spinning her nunchakus and advanced on them menacingly. Silver was quick to recover and he swiped his arm at Natasha. The swipe of the arm sent a wave of psychic energy hurtling towards Natasha and it whacked her in the face. Natasha staggered backwards and stopped spinning her nunchakus. Blaze showered Natasha with fire but the Martian wasn't affected much by the blazing flames. She span her nunchakus around and began to push through the fire due to the spinning nunchakus blowing the fire away. Blaze stopped throwing fire at her and leaped over Natasha. She landed behind her and stuck her in the back with a spinning fire kick. Natasha fell flat on her face and Silver held her into place with his psychokinesis. The poor Martian couldn't move, she was fixed to the spot as if she was frozen.

"Such incredible power!" she gasped "Where does he get it from?"

Silver raised Natasha off the ground with psychic energy and with a thrust of the arms; he sent her flying through the air and into her saucer. She hit the saucer on the edge and sent it tumbling upside down. Natasha growled and got back to her feet. Silver lunged at her but Natasha was quick to react and slammed him in the face with a powerful kick. Silver was sent tumbling backwards and he landed on his back. Blaze charged towards Natasha in a fiery charge but the Martian leaped out of her way and landed a dropkick on the back of Blaze's head. Then Natasha picked up her nunchakus and began whacking Blaze on the back with them. Normal nunchakus hurt very much but nunchakus with spikes are bound to hurt even more. One of the nunchakus' spikes slashed Blaze across the back and tore a thin gash in her purple robe. Silver decided to help Blaze by levitating with psychic energy and charging into Natasha. Natasha heard him coming but was too slow to react and she ended up being slammed right in the stomach by Silver's

incredible speed. She dropped her nunchakus again and fell on her back. With the opponent out of commission, Silver tended to Blaze.

"Are you OK Blaze?" he asked, helping her onto her feet.

"I'm fine, thank you." said Blaze weakly "Just a little sore from those wicked nunchakus."

"We'd best run for it before Natasha gets back up." said Silver, putting Blaze's arm around his shoulder so he could help her walk away "I wonder what those Martians want us for?"

"Never mind that, why do they want to deliver us to the Seedrians?" said Blaze "The Martians act like we've committed a crime against the Seedrians and they're trying to help them bring us into justice."

"But we haven't done anything to the Seedrians." noted Silver "We've only ever met one of them and that was on Mobius…"

Then suddenly a loud bang went off and a thick wiry net fell on top of Silver and Blaze. The net had sharp tips so once the net closed around them; it dug into the ground, trapping them. Natasha had stored a spare net gun in her hover saucer should all else fail. This net gun fired a thick wiry net instead of a rope net so it was much stronger then a rope net. Blaze tried to burn the net down with her fire attacks but the net wasn't singed the slightest.

"Don't think you can burn your way out of that dear." cackled Natasha "Wire nets cannot be burnt to ashes like a rope net can."

"Well can it resist my psychokinesis?" yelled Silver.

Using his psychic powers, he tried to tear the net out of the ground and lift it off of him and Blaze but Natasha ran to him, nunchaku in hand and she walloped him on the head with it, breaking his concentration and knocking him out.

"Oh no little boy, we can't have you and your girlfriend escaping yet." purred Natasha "We need to deliver you to our friends the Seedrians."

She lifted the net off of Silver and Blaze and snapped a pair of

handcuffs on both of them. Then she lifted them both by the scruff of their necks and stuffed them into her hover saucer.

"You'll regret this I promise you!" warned Blaze, pulling on her handcuffs.

"Regret what pretty kitty?" sneered Natasha.

"Don't call me that!" snarled Blaze.

"Whatever." said an un-amused Natasha "Just shut up or I'll hurt you worse then I've already have."

She climbed into the hover saucer and drove away. Next stop, the Seedrian palace and due to being at war with the Seedrians for months, Natasha knew where it was so she would arrive there in no time at all…

Count Drago was in his lair pondering about something or another until he received a call. He whipped out a holographic phone, pressed a button and put it on the table. A hologram of Diablo appeared from the phone. Instead of phones, Martians used holographic phones and they thought these were much more reliable then an ordinary phone since they always knew who they were talking to.

"Count Drago I have good news." said the hologram of Diablo "Natasha has apprehended the Mobians and is taking them to the Seedrians so they can be punished by them."

"Then my plan is formulated." said Count Drago coldly "I will round up the assassination squad. We will sneak into the palace and attack once you give us the command."

"Yes brother." said Diablo "Do not fail me or else…"

The holographic phone switched off and the hologram of Diablo disappeared. Count Drago put the phone away and turned to a large squad of Martians all trained in the art of stealth combat. They were dressed completely in black as if they were cat burglars and they were armed with weapons capable of breaking into a building of any kind.

"This is our moment of triumph boys." announced Count Drago "Once Diablo gives the much anticipated command to sneak into that wretched palace, we shall sneak into it and assassinate Dark Oak and Earthia. Then we will lay siege to the palace and Diablo, with an army of Martians will met us at the rendezvous point to add much needed insult to injury. Failure is not an option. If you fail me then I'll have to punish every single one of you. Is that understood my minions?"

"Yes sir, Count Drago sir!" cried the soldiers in unison.

"Good." said the Count "Now prepare yourselves. We must be ready for when Diablo gives the command. I can hardly wait to vanquish those accursed Seedrians once and for all…"

And with that he let out a low haunting chuckle that would give anyone the chills…

Footnotes:

*** *See STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 84for Silver and Blaze's cracking debut**

**** I know you can't have forgotten Dr. Eggman's total roboticization of Mobius in *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Stories 80-83**

***** Surely you haven't forgotten the epic Devatron saga (*STH: Stories 100-115*) have you?**

**** See Arc 13: Last Attempt at Victory

******* See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 84-87**

This isn't looking good. Silver and Blaze are going to be used as scapegoats in a war they want no part in! Can they prove their innocence and save the Seedrians from the Martians? Or will they strike back too soon for them to act...?

P.S. Count Drago is NOT my character. He belongs to my brother and he was used with permission so if you have any thoughts on Drago, give regards to my brother, not me.

All's Fair in Warfare 2

Arc 15: All's Fair in Warfare

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 119-120

Part 2

Natasha finally arrived at the Seedrian palace with the captured Silver and Blaze in tow. The Seedrian palace was a grand place with petal shapes around the windows and doors and a huge rose bud shaped structure was perched on the roof of this magnificent place. Blaze was pretty impressed by the Seedrian palace. She hadn't seen a proper nice palace before since she lived in a dystopian future so she had to savour the moment while she can. Silver was beginning to come around at long last.

"Mmm…what happened?" he murmured under his breath.

"Silver." whispered Blaze "I think we're at the Seedrian palace."

"What…?" mumbled Silver sleepily.

"Be quiet back there!" snapped Natasha as she switched the saucer off.

She yanked Silver and Blaze out of the saucer and carried them towards the palace. She knocked on the tall towering doors. Lucas answered it. He no longer had his battle armour on so he wasn't Dark Oak anymore; instead he was dressed in a kingly robe. Without his battle armour he looked the same as other male Seedrians, he was rather round with a short tail, small antler-like growths on his head and a coloured ridge on the top of his head. He was purple just like his battle armour.

"Yes?" said Lucas. His voice was different to the way he sounded with his helmet on.

"As requested, I have captured the ones who have murdered your daughter Dark Oak." said Natasha, showing Silver and Blaze to him.

"WHAT?!" screamed Silver "What are you talking about? Me and Blaze haven't murdered anyone's daughter!"

"You would say that wouldn't you?" hissed Natasha "Let's see if Dark Oak believes you."

Silver turned to face a very angry Lucas who just stared at him and Blaze with gritted teeth and clenched fists.

"Um Dark Oak sir." said Silver "I'm afraid there's been a misunderstanding…"

"Don't you lecture me boy!" snarled Lucas "You savages murdered my daughter Cosmo and you are going to stand trial for it!"

"We haven't done anything of the sort!" snapped Blaze "We're not even from this timeline so we couldn't possibly have murdered Cosmo!"

"A likely story." growled Lucas "You two will stand trial and hopefully, get the sentence you deserve! Thanks so much for bringing these savages to us Natasha."

"My pleasure former enemy of the Martians." said Natasha "I guess this more then makes up for the war doesn't it?"

Silver and Blaze looked at each other. What was going on? Something definitely wasn't right here.

"Not quite, but it is a start." said Lucas "Now if you'll excuse me, I have murderers to deal with."

"We haven't murdered anyone!" shouted Silver "Can't you get that through your stupid head?"

Lucas resisted the urge to mash Silver into toothpaste and he dragged the two Mobians into the palace. The door clanged shut behind him. Natasha climbed back into her saucer and drove away. She pulled out a walkie-talkie and spoke into it.

"Diablo?" she called.

"I'm here sweetheart." said Diablo "What is it?"

"I've successfully delivered the Mobians to the Seedrians and now they're standing trial for the murder they haven't committed." informed Natasha "I'm amazed Dark Oak's buying all this so well but then again, he is a bit of a thicky isn't he?"

"Excellent!" bellowed Diablo from the other side of the walkie-talkie "Those Seedrians will fall foul to their stupidity once Count Drago and his squad assassinate Dark Oak and Earthia!"

"Yes they will Diablo." purred Natasha, switching the walkie-talkie off and putting it away.

She sped through the war torn wasteland and headed for home. This was going to be one of the greatest days of the Martian's lives and she knew it. The Martians would finally defeat the Seedrians once and for all and no one will see it coming…

Meanwhile, Silver and Blaze had been thrown into a dark, dank, smelly cell located directly under the palace itself. The cell reeked of rotting carcasses of past prisoners; skeletons littered the place and water dripped from the ceiling. Silver and Blaze had shackles around their wrists and the shackles were linked to the wall by a long chain. They sat on a rotting wooden bench that was extremely uncomfortable and splinters were sticking up around the edges. The Seedrians sure knew how to deal with prisoners. Silver had spent the past five minutes trying to break his shackles but the chain was too tough and he couldn't use his psychokinesis to unlock them or break them. Blaze had even tried melting the chain with her fire powers but the chain was heatproof so her fire powers couldn't free herself and Silver. Whereas Blaze gave up immediately, Silver continued to persist with his futile attempts to break the chains.

"Silver will you give it up already?" moaned Blaze "You're getting on my nerves."

"I'm not putting up with this!" yelled Silver "Me and you have been accused of a crime we didn't commit, heck, HASN'T been committed so I'm gonna bust outta here and prove our innocence!"

"Silver, a prison break isn't going to prove our innocence." noted Blaze "It is just going to make us look like fugitives so I say we should stop our futile attempts and wait for the trial. Then we can prove our innocence."

Silver stopped pulling on his shackles and sighed heavily. He knew Blaze was right. He just hoped the other Seedrians would believe him unlike Lucas who seemed pretty intent on giving them an undeserved sentence.

"One thing I wanna know is what on Mobius makes that idiot Dark Oak think we've murdered Cosmo?" grumbled Silver "In fact, how does he even know about us? We don't exist in this timeline!"

"I think the Martians are lying to him." said Blaze grimly "I bet the Martians are using us as scapegoats to win the Seedrian's trust for some reason."

"But how do the Martians know about us?" said Silver "The soldiers we took out earlier didn't know what we were so how do they suddenly know what we are?"

"I dunno." said Blaze "I'm not even sure how they know Cosmo is on Mobius."

"Well I guess it's a mystery we'll have to solve." said Silver "Once we prove our innocence, we will have to find out exactly what's going on."

"I just hope the trial will be merciful." said Blaze solemnly "Or we're dead meat."

Then suddenly the cell door swung open and clanged against the wall, making Silver and Blaze jump and letting in a ray of light that broke the darkness. An armoured guard was at the door and he glared at Silver and Blaze.

"Its trial time you two." he hissed in his gravel voice.

He marched over to the two Mobians and unshackled their wrists. Silver and Blaze stood up and the guard led them out of the cell.

"I wouldn't try to resist you mongrels." warned the guard "Because you won't make it out alive."

"We won't try to resist." said Blaze "We will settle this peacefully."

The guard led them through the corridors to the courtroom. This was where the trial would take place and the court was run by Cosmo's mother Earthia. The sentences and the fates of the prisoners were all up to her and who knows what she would do to Silver and Blaze once the trial began…

Meanwhile, Count Drago and his assassination squad arrived around the back of the Seedrian palace in a hover saucer. The Count was well prepared for this kind of mission. He had brought cutting tools to cut through the walls and sneak in and he had brought a long thin laser rifle to shoot Earthia and Lucas with. He ordered the Martians to use the laser sticks to cut through the wall. Two Martian soldiers got to it instantly and they activated their laser sticks. A thin red scorching laser began to sear its way into the wall and the Martians dragged them sideways and then straight down to cut a near big square into the wall. After that was done, Count Drago tapped the chunk with his finger and the wall fell down and smashed to pieces. Then the Martians sneaked inside and crept as quiet as mice through the dark corridors. The Count knew where the courtroom was since he had once invaded the palace during the war but he couldn't just walk through the door and shoot Earthia and Lucas, he preferred the subtle route so he and the Martians sneaked to a door that led them to the back of the courtroom. Count Drago sneaked through the door and looked around to see which was the best place to hide. He spotted the bench, the place where the judge sits and crept behind it with his soldiers following him. He bent down and quietly loaded his rifle. He peeked around the corner to see Earthia sitting at the bench, waiting for the prisoners to appear. This was the perfect place to strike now he only had to wait for the right time.

"OK you morons." he hissed to his soldiers "We will unleash our firepower once Earthia sentences the Mobians or if those Mobians manage to sway the opinions of the court and humbly prove their innocence. Once we shoot Earthia and Dark Oak, we call Diablo and he will arrive at the rendezvous point which is where my saucer is parked. Once he arrives, we will all lay siege to the palace and silence those Seedrians forever got it?"

"Got it." whispered the soldiers.

"Good." hissed the Count "Now keep quiet, the trial is about to commence."

The soldiers remained still and as quiet as mice just as the guard leading Silver and Blaze to the court opened the doors of the courtroom and signalled for Silver and Blaze to walk through. They reluctantly obeyed and walked through the doors and into the grand courtroom. The court was full of Seedrians all glaring at Silver and Blaze fiercely. Silver just glared back at them whereas Blaze kept her face straight and her attention away from the furious crowd. To their relief, Lucas did not seem to be anywhere. This was because it was Earthia's duty to run the court and Lucas was only meant to run the army or help her run the palace. They stood at the booth and peered up at Earthia who was sitting in a raised desk known as the bench where the court judge sits in an actual court. Earthia was a female Seedrian in a white robe with gold cuffs around the wrists and she had a red gem on her chest just like her daughter Cosmo. Her petal-like hair was turquoise with a few white petals and two thin yellow strands and much longer then Cosmo's. Her eyes were teal coloured and her eyes were much narrower then Cosmo's. Earthia looked down from the bench at the defendants standing before her. Unlike Lucas, she didn't show how angry she was, she kept her emotions inside herself and remained clam about the whole situation.

"So People of Mobius." she said coldly to Silver and Blaze "You two are charged with the murder of my youngest daughter Cosmo. This information was given to me by our former enemies the Martians. One of the Martians claimed to have been to your Homeworld and actually witnessed the murder before his very eyes and he claims you were the ones who did it. How do you plead?"

Silver was about to rant at Earthia but Blaze clasped her hand around his mouth.

" *I'll* do the talking Silver!" she hissed.

Silver said nothing more and Blaze spoke.

"Your grace, your daughter Cosmo is not dead." Blaze said to Earthia "She is alive and well and I should know because me and my friend Silver here have visited her."

Earthia seemed to take this in well.

"So I guess the Martian that told me this was lying?" she said.

"He was." said Blaze "And even if Cosmo was dead, we couldn't have done it because we are from the future."

The jury all gasped. Earthia's eyes widened in surprise.

"The future?" she mused "How do I know this isn't a lie?"

Blaze said nothing but she pulled out the tiny fragments that remained of the broken Time Stone. Earthia bent down to look at the pieces.

"These are the broken remains of the Time Stone." explained Blaze "Me and Silver used this to time travel here."

"Why did you travel to our time then?" asked Earthia inquisitively.

"We came here by accident." said Silver "I was trying to get to Mobius in the past but the Time Stone was damaged so it didn't work properly and accidentally brought us here."

"I see." said Earthia "Well after this talk I can safely say there's been a horrible misunderstanding and I can declare you not guilty of this uncommitted crime."

"Objection!" yelled a member of the court. He was a male Seedrian dressed in a smart outfit consisting of a tuxedo and bow tie.

"What is it Marvin?" sighed Earthia.

"How do we know these Mobians aren't lying to us about your daughter's death?!" declared Marvin "They say they couldn't have done it because they're from the future BUT they could have travelled back in time and killed her! You didn't think of that did you?"

"These innocent beings claim my daughter isn't even dead." said Earthia "And I don't think they'd go to all the trouble going back in time just to murder someone from the past."

"Yeah, we aren't like that!" Silver yelled at Marvin.

"If you can prove to us Cosmo is alive then I'll be convinced." said Marvin.

"And proof you shall have." said Blaze "Your grace, do you have any means of time travel at all?"

"Well I have a Super Warp Ring that Lucas gave to me for my birthday once." said Earthia "I've never used it though; it just hangs on the wall in my bedroom where it looks nice."

"Well if you let us use it we can warp you to Mobius and show you that Cosmo is indeed alive." said Blaze.

"OK then Madame." said Earthia politely "Just excuse me while I fetch it."

Earthia stood down from the bench and left the courtroom to fetch her Super Warp Ring. The court fell into a murmuring silence whereas Silver and Blaze just waited. Count Drago and his soldiers knew that the Mobians would end up being declared innocent now so they began to debate among each other.

"What should we do?" cried one soldier with a high voice.

"Should we shoot her before she can use that warp ring thingy?" cried another with a medium tone of voice.

"You clowns will silence your accursed worrying right now!" snarled

the Count "We will kill Earthia after she gives the final sentence and not a second before and that's final."

"Yes Count." said the soldiers obediently.

Earthia suddenly returned into the courtroom twirling her Super Warp Ring around her finger. She handed it to Blaze.

"I trust you know how this works?" she said.

"We Mobians have warp ring technology even in the future." said Blaze "So yes we do know how to work this."

She flicked the warp ring into the air and the once tiny ring expanded into the size of a small paddling pool. The jury gasped in amazement at this magical act.

"Just step through there and you'll end up on present day Mobius." instructed Blaze.

Earthia obeyed and stepped through the warp ring. Silver followed her just to make sure she didn't run into any trouble.

Earthia was warped from the courtroom and into a beautiful grassy meadow that expanded for miles on end and was surrounded by trees. In the distance, loop-the-loop style rocks could be seen. She was in Green Hill Zone, the current home of Sonic the Hedgehog. Earthia had not been in touch with nature for months due to the war with the Martians tearing everything apart so suddenly stepping into a grass meadow thrilled her. Silver stepped out of the warp ring and it shrunk back down to size.

"I never thought your planet would be as beautiful as this." said Earthia.

"In my time zone, it isn't" said Silver sadly "Some terrible disaster happens at an unknown point in time and wrecks the future. Me and Blaze live in a post apocalyptic world and we have no idea how it all happened."

"That's so sad young man." said Earthia sympathetically "I bet a visit to the past makes you wish your present time line looked like this."

"It does." said Silver, surveying his surroundings with admiration "When I first visited here, I was so taken aback by the beauty of the past it gave me more determination then ever to fix my future."

"You have a lot of spirit young man." said Earthia proudly "I bet with such determination you'll get things right in no time."

"Yeah." said Silver, rubbing the back of his head modestly. Then he snapped his fingers "What are we doing just standing here talking? We need to find Cosmo so I can show you she's alive!"

And with that Silver took Earthia by the hand and ran as fast as he could run. Cosmo could be anywhere right now so Silver had no idea where she would be and how long it would take to find her. By sheer luck though they managed to find her a few minutes later. They ducked behind a bush and watched as Sonic and his friends were celebrating two recent victories, the defeat of the Devatrons* and the defeat of the Raiju clan** with a celebration picnic. Sonic had been released from hospital after finally coming to and he was quite happily munching on chilli-dogs. Silver began to wonder what had happened to Sonic as he observed his bandaged appearance but it was clear that Sonic was going to live so it didn't really matter to him.

"So guys, you and Shadow managed to help free Chun-Nan from the Raiju clan eh?" said Sonic "And without me no less. I'm impressed with you all. I always said you guys were way past cool."

Silver knew what he meant since he had read about the Devatron invasion back in his time zone but he didn't know about the Raiju clan since he hadn't read about it. He also knew that whatever doomed his future, it was not the Devatron invasion since the book he'd read had stated the invasion was thwarted by Sonic and the Raiju clan couldn't be responsible because the Royal Fighters had just thwarted them along with the Devatrons. Earthia watched everybody feasting away and then she saw the one person she was looking for, her youngest daughter Cosmo, sitting next to Tails and the two appeared to be having a good laugh. Silver spotted her too.

"So there you have it." he said to Earthia "Cosmo is alive."

"It feels like a thousand years since I last saw her." said Earthia with tears of happiness in her eyes "And now the war with the Martians is over, I'll be able to collect her and bring her home."

"I dunno about that." said Silver "She seems kinda happy here. I think she might not want to leave."

"Well me and Lucas will come to this world sometime soon and we'll see what her decision is." said Earthia "Now can you please warp me back to the courtroom so I can dismiss you and your friend?"

"Absolutely." said Silver.

He was reluctant to leave such a nice looking timeline but he knew he had to save his world and Earthia needed to dismiss he and Blaze from the charges. He flicked the Super Warp Ring into the air and it expanded once again. Earthia took one last look at her happy daughter and with a tear trickling down her face; she walked through the warp ring. Silver looked back one last time before following her through the ring. The warp ring closed and flashed out of existence, catching the attention of Sonic the Hedgehog.

"Anything wrong Sonic?" asked Tails.

"I thought I saw something." Sonic said, putting a finger to his chin "It almost looked like a warp ring closing or something like that."

"Don't worry about it Sonic." said Knuckles reassuringly "I'm sure it's nothing."

"OK then." said Sonic, deciding to forget about it.

And with that the friends continued to picnic away. Pity it wouldn't last since the Black Arms were now attempting to invade…

Back on the Seedrian planet, Earthia and Silver returned through the Super Warp Ring much to the amazement of the jury. Count Drago saw this and pulled out a communicator. He spoke quietly into it.

"I'm ready to assassinate." he whispered "You and your army may

come to us now."

"Very well Drago." came the voice of Diablo on the other side of the communicator "I will get here as soon as I can."

Drago switched the communicator off and aimed his loaded rifle at Earthia just as she had begun to speak to the jury.

"Members of the jury." she said "Silver here has proven to me that Cosmo is alive. This ring." she showed everybody the Super Warp Ring "Warped me to the Mobian's home planet and I've seen Cosmo alive and well there and looking very happy."

The jury murmured amongst each other.

"So because of this I can now declare these two Mobians not guilty and they're dismissed and they can go free now. That is all."

The jury cheered over the fact that Cosmo was alive and the Mobians hadn't done anything to her at all. Silver and Blaze hugged each other happily, thrilled that they had been cleared. Unfortunately, the happiness wouldn't last. Count Drago had his rifle aimed directly at Earthia's back and he was ready to pull the trigger. While hugging Blaze, Silver saw a glisten of light shine amongst a polished surface and it didn't take him long to work out what it was and where it was aiming at.

"Look out!" cried Silver.

Count Drago opened fire immediately after Silver cried "Look out!" but Silver used his psychokinesis to levitate Earthia off the ground and out of the way of the blast. The rifle blast hit the wall on the far side of the room. The jury gasped in horror at that sudden attack whereas Count Drago began to grumble at his failure. Earthia stared at Silver.

"You…you saved my life." she gasped.

"Well I had to." said Silver "Cosmo would be devastated if she returned home only to find her mother is dead."

As for Count Drago he threw his rifle on the floor and grumbled.

"Blast that spiky kid and his accursed psychic powers!" he growled "I guess we'll have to do this the unsubtle way!"

He and the Martian soldiers leaped out from behind the bench and aimed their guns at just about anybody they wanted. Silver and Blaze bent down in a fighting stance and got ready to attack whereas Earthia just gasped.

"Count Drago?" she said hoarsely "What in heaven's name are you doing here?"

"I am here to rid you of your life Madame." sneered the Count "And don't think you can stop me from doing this because you cannot."

"But…I thought we were allies now." said Earthia "You lot surrendered! Lucas told me himself!"

Count Drago just laughed at her and the Martian soldiers joined in.

"Did you really think we'd have the humiliation of forfeiting a battle to vermin like you?" he cackled "It was all part of my ingenious plan to win this war! We pretended to forfeit and we framed those Mobians for a crime that hasn't been committed to win your trust. And now we have it, we decided to strike at the most available opportunity which is right now."

"I cannot believe that Lucas and even I believed you savages for a minute!" cried Earthia sharply "I should've known you monsters wouldn't surrender to us!"

"Yes you should have." sneered Count Drago "Now, prepare to die Madame!"

He aimed the rifle at her face and prepared to fire until Silver used his psychic powers to yank the gun out of Drago's hand. Then using his psychic powers, he proceeded to bend the gun so hard that it snapped in two like a twig. Then Silver dropped the broken gun and Count Drago glared at him.

"You will pay for this insolence you miscreant!" he snarled.

Count Drago lunged at Silver but Silver merely used his psychic

energy to halt the Count in mid air.

"Do you seriously think you can stop me?" jeered Silver "Psychic energy overpowers everything!"

"You fool!" growled Count Drago "We Martians are tough, your psychic powers have no sway over me!"

And with that he somehow managed to break free of Silver's psychokinesis! He dropped to the ground and landed on his feet. Silver was too shocked to speak. No one he had battled with had ever had the power to trump his psychic powers.

"No way…!" he spluttered "How…?"

"My strength is great enough to overpower primitive telekinesis!" gloated the Count "If you want to defeat me, you'll have to fight me hand to hand."

"If it's a fight you want you've got it!" cried Silver "Blaze come on! Let's beat him!"

"With pleasure." hissed Blaze, her hands surrounded by flames.

"You can't fight in here!" shrieked Earthia "This is a room of law and order!"

The three fighters ignored her and they lunged for each other. Count Drago landed the first blow by walloping Silver in the cheek with his fist and sending him hurtling over whereas Blaze hit him in the face with a flick of flames. Count Drago retaliated with a powerful uppercut to the chin and Blaze was sent hurtling backwards. Silver used his psychokinesis on Count Drago again and before the Count could break free, Silver thrust his arms forward and sent him falling on his stomach. Before the Count could get up, Blaze landed a spinning fiery kick onto his back. Then she landed a fiery punch into the metal half of Count Drago's face, smashing his optic to pieces. Now he could only see through his organic eye. But even with one eye, Count Drago could still see well. Before Blaze could attack him again, the Count rolled out of the way and jumped back to his feet. Blaze sent a jet of fire flying into his face but Count Drago wasn't

affected by the flames. He pushed through them and punched Blaze on the nose. Silver stepped into help but Drago kicked backwards and hit Silver in the chest. Silver fell onto his back and gasped and spluttered. Count Drago grabbed Blaze by the neck and through her into the bench. Blaze crashed through it, leaving a giant hole in it. Before Count Drago could attack again, Silver threw a wave of psychic energy into his face. Count Drago staggered sideways and before he could recover, Silver punched him again. Unfortunately, Count Drago grabbed his quills and threw him up into the ceiling. Silver hit the ceiling so hard it cracked and some plaster began to fall down onto the floor. The jury screamed and ran before anyone could get hit by the falling rubble. Some of the rubble landed on the floor and some landed on the seats just as the jury fled.

"Please stop this battle before the courtroom gets wrecked any further!" begged Earthia.

"The battle goes on for as long as these two keep coming for me." stated Count Drago "Besides, this room will look a lot better once it's reduced to rubble."

"And you will look better when you're all fried up!" yelled Blaze, lunging at Count Drago in a fiery leap.

Count Drago merely slapped her away and she dived into the floor. She cracked it severely and some bits of floor stuck up.

"You cannot begin to fathom my superior power." boasted Count Drago "This fight has barely started and I'm already overpowering you. All you weaklings have managed to do is destroy my robotic eye."

"We'll do much more then that!" yelled Silver, breaking free from the ceiling and charging towards Count Drago like a mad bull charging the matador.

Count Drago lunged for Silver and they both punched at each other. Their fists made contact but Silver's punch combined with his psychic powers won the scuffle and Count Drago was sent hurtling into the floor. Silver then added insult to injury by landing a kick slam onto the Count's stomach. The Count was badly winded by that

slam and he coughed and spluttered heavily after Silver had finished.

"How's that County?" sneered Silver.

"Cough! impressive kid." wheezed Count Drago "But not splutter! enough!"

He got back to his feet, still clutching his stomach in pain but looking pretty much alright.

"Martians have tremendous stamina so this fight will go on for a long time." said Count Drago darkly.

"Oh rats!" cried Silver "I hope we can keep this up until he eventually gives in to us!"

"We will Silver." said Blaze, getting up from the cracked floor "Me and you together will be strong enough to take this creep out."

Count Drago merely laughed at them.

"Are you two overly arrogant or what?" he sneered.

"The only arrogant person I see is you!" yelled Silver, charging at Count Drago at blinding speed.

Count Drago held his hands up to catch Silver but the psychic hedgehog was too strong for him and he pushed him backwards straight into the wall. Before Silver could do anything else, Count Drago punched him in the face with both fists. Silver hurtled into the floor and Blaze decided to attack. She and Count Drago charged at each other but the Count's charge was stronger and he sent Blaze hurtling head over heels backwards. Before Blaze could get up, Count Drago elbowed her in the gut. Blaze gasped and wheezed as the air was sucked out of her lungs from that blow. Count Drago's elbows felt more like she was hit by a baseball bat. Silver leaped up and tried another flying punch but the Count smacked him away and sent him diving into the floor face first. Silver and Blaze both recovered and stood in fighting stances on either side of the Count. Drago just stood in a fighting stance and waited for them. Silver and Blaze lunged for him but Count Drago kicked backwards and hit

Silver in the groin (ouch!) and then he punched Blaze in the cheek and sent them both collapsing to the ground.

"You heathens! I could keep this up all day!" gloated Count Drago "Soldiers, burn them alive!"

"With pleasure Count!" cackled the soldiers.

They switched their rifles from laser blasts to flamethrowers. They activated the flamethrowers and advanced on the downed Mobians. Blaze however was not the least bit worried by this. As the flamethrowers neared her, she just snapped her fingers and the fire in the flamethrowers all went out at once. The soldiers were gobsmacked whereas Blaze and Silver smirked at them.

"What the heck? The fire in my flamethrower's out!" shrieked one soldier.

"That's because I am a pyrokinetic." said Blaze "I control flames, I can start them and end them, like this!"

She swept all the soldiers away with one sweep of fire. The soldiers all hit the wall and passed out. Unfortunately, Count Drago saw the opportunity to attack Blaze from behind and kicked her in the back. Then he thumped her on the head with his fist and sent Blaze falling over in a daze. Silver threw a wave of psychic energy at Count Drago but the fiendish Count merely slapped it away and threw Blaze into Silver. Silver caught her with his psychokinesis and lowered her gently to the floor. Unfortunately that just gave Count Drago the opportunity to dropkick Silver and then punch him into the floor. Earthia cried out for them whereas Count Drago gave a cold chuckle.

"This is ludicrous!" gasped Blaze "He's against the two of us and is holding his own out here!"

"He won't be for long!" declared Silver "I'm sorry Earthia but I'm gonna have to wreck your courtroom even more for this!"

He focused his thoughts on a section of the ceiling and using his psychokinesis, he managed to make the ceiling crumble and break

way. Enormous chunks of rubble rained down on Count Drago. Count Drago punched some of the rubble away but he wasn't swift enough to deal with all of it and he was soon buried alive under the caving ceiling. Earthia was not pleased with this but she knew it was for a good cause. After the ceiling finished caving in on Count Drago, Silver stopped what he was doing and panted.

"Whew! That amount of psychic energy makes my head spin!" he murmured.

"Well even though you've just wrecked the courtroom you've managed to defeat Count Drago." said Earthia with a smile "You have saved us all from the menace of Diablo's brother."

"Say what?" cried Silver "Count Drago has a brother?"

"What's he like then?" asked Blaze.

"He's worse then Count Drago and much stronger." said Earthia gloomily "Only my husband Lucas has managed to face him in combat and survive."

"Well I bet if me and Blaze teamed up with Lucas we could defeat Drago's brother." suggested Silver "I hope he's willing to team up with us since he probably still thinks we're murderers."

"It might work." said Earthia "But don't under estimate Diablo. He is formidable and strong enough to take on a whole army at once."

"Wow that's strong." said Silver "I bet when the Martians invade Mobius Diablo will be the reason Mobius loses to the Martians and my future is a wreck."

"I beg your pardon?" asked Earthia.

Before Silver could explain what he meant, the mountain of rubble began to shudder and shake. Then Count Drago erupted out of the rubble, roaring like a lion. Silver used his psychic powers to stop himself, Blaze and Earthia from getting hit by the flying pieces of rubble. Then Silver threw all the rubble back at Count Drago. The Count merely punched the flying rubble and reduced it to pebbles and dust. He glared coldly at Silver and Blaze. Silver and Blaze

prepared to attack him again.

"Give it up Count Strago!" shouted Silver "You can't possibly expect to defeat us!"

"I cannot defeat you alone Mobians." said the Count "But I have brought reinforcements."

The moment he said the word reinforcements, some dark figures crashed through the windows with a frightening smash and landed in the courtroom. They were all Martian soldiers and they were armed with laser rifles. Then the door burst off its hinges and in walked none other then Diablo, Natasha and Marik. Diablo has his deadly mace at the ready and it looked like a very hard mace indeed. Natasha had her spiked nunchakus out and Marik just grinned wickedly at the Mobians and Earthia. Count Drago laughed at the surrounded Mobians as they eyed every Martian helplessly.

"Think you can handle all of us spiky?" crowed Count Drago.

Silver and Blaze stood back to back as the Martians glared evilly at them with their horrible orange eyes, their fingers itching to pull the trigger and blast them to smithereens…

Footnotes:

***See *STH: Heroes Of Mobius* Story 115 for Sonic's victory over Devion.**

**** See *STH: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 116-119 for the battle against the Raiju clan**

Well this doesn't look good. The Martians have come to attack and Silver and Blaze are gonna have their hands full! Can they stop the Martians or will they win this one?

All's Fair in Warfare 3

Arc 15: All's Fair in Warfare

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 119-120

Part 3

"Hello Earthia." purred Diablo, patting his mace affectionately "Long time no see eh?"

"Diablo." said Earthia, staring straight up at the seven foot Martian. She was very tiny compared to Diablo's monstrous height.

"I'm not pleased you failed your assassination attempt brother Drago." growled Diablo, staring at the Count angrily.

"It was all the fault of the two Mobians my liege!" protested Count Drago madly "I would have successfully killed Earthia if that silver idiot didn't save her!"

Now one of the things you should never do, is make a psychokinetic person angry because when a psychokinetic person get angry, their anger can explode in an unpredictable way and Silver was just about to show us how.

"Idiot…?" piped Silver "Idiot?! I'll show you who's the idiot around here!"

Using his psychokinesis, he yanked Diablo's mace out of his hand and proceeded to wallop him around the head with it. Diablo was baffled by the fact he was getting beaten up by his own mace and the fact his mace was seemingly doing it itself was even more baffling. Count Drago tried to seize Silver but Silver just halted him with his psychic powers and threw him into the wall before he could break free. Natasha tried to help Diablo but Silver halted her with his psychokinesis. All the soldiers surrounding them tried to help but Blaze surrounded herself, Silver, Diablo and Natasha by a ring of

fire. No one dared to step through it as they would be fried up like a beef burger. Silver still continued to senselessly beat Diablo up with his own weapon. Even though Diablo's armour was tough, his weapon still hurt him and then the mace hit him in the places where he didn't wear any armour such as his arms and legs. The psychic controlled mace walloped Diablo on the back of the leg and forced the giant Martian down on one knee. Natasha, who was still frozen by psychic energy, couldn't bear to watch her husband get beaten up.

"Stop this infernal beating this minute or I'll pluck every single one of your quills one by one spiky!" ordered Natasha.

"I'll stop if you Martians surrender to the Seedrians for real." said Silver crossly "And you'd better mean it or I'll wallop *you* with Diablo's mace!"

Then suddenly he was struck in the back by a jolt of electricity and his concentration over the mace and Natasha was broken. The mace dropped lifelessly to the floor and Diablo grabbed it. Natasha dropped to the floor and she picked herself up. Silver picked himself up and soon found out what had attacked him. Marik the Martian had accidentally been separated from the soldiers by Blaze's wall of fire and he zapped Silver with his metallic hand. He looked very peeved off.

"That just about tears it!" he roared "You Mobians can beat me up all you like! But NO ONE hurts my dad!"

"Oh yeah?!" cried Silver challengingly "Bring it on you miserable midget!"

"Midget?!" snorted Marik "You're one to talk! You're roughly the same height as me! And so is Sonic the Hedgehog for that matter."

"Speaking of Sonic Marik, why aren't you on Mobius anymore?" asked Silver "Had enough of Sonic kicking your butt? Or did you just decide to go and get a new pair of jet shoes?"

"I did the latter actually and now I have a new pair of jet shoes, but the main reason I came back here was to avoid getting destroyed by

the Devatrons." snapped Marik.

"I've read all about the Devatrons." said Silver "They tried to conquer Mobius and instead, got beaten by Sonic and friends. I bet you think the Devatrons have won already don't you?"

"I already know about the Devatron's defeat." said Marik crossly "It mystifies me though how the Devatrons can beat us Martians and yet they couldn't beat Sonic and his furry freaks he calls friends!"

"Just proves that you Martians aren't as tough as you think." jeered Silver, smirking at him.

"I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TOUGH I AM WRETCH!" thundered Marik, leaping on Silver like a pouncing leopard.

Silver just raised his hand and halted him with psychic energy. Marik was stuck frozen in mid-air, helpless before Silver who was holding him there with merely a thought. Then Silver clenched his fist and made something on Marik's robotical hand crack. Marik looked at the palm of his hand and he frowned in annoyance. His voltage compactor had been cracked again. How it annoyed him when it kept getting damaged and needing to be fixed!

"Not my voltage compactor!" wailed Marik "I can't electrocute you now!"

"Oh really?" said Silver "That just makes it easier for me to defeat you."

Using his psychic powers, he sent Marik flying through the ring of fire and crashing into a wall. Silver laughed.

"You guys are a joke!" he chuckled "I'm amazed the Seedrians haven't won this war yet!"

"YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING YET FILITHY RAT!" thundered Diablo.

He smashed the ground with his mace and caused a terrific earthquake that ripped through the floor and made many of the tiles stick up and Silver and Blaze fall over.

"And we can do without that stupid ring of fire!" yelled Diablo.

He swung his mace around and around in circular style. He span it so fast his hand became a blur and it felt like the mace had turned into a fan due to the cool breeze he was making. Diablo walked around in a circle with his mace spinning around madly and with one fell breeze, the fire was put out and now the soldiers could attack.

"Incredible!" gasped Blaze "He put my fire out by spinning his weapon!"

"Is that supposed to make you tough?" growled Silver "Well if you're so tough, let's see you get away from this!"

Using his psychokinesis, he halted Diablo. But just like Count Drago, Diablo broke free of Silver's psychic hold. Silver was flabbergasted by that.

"No way! You can overcome psychokinesis too?" he spluttered

"Of course I can!" gloated Diablo "My power is great enough to overpower anything!"

"How about this?!" yelled Blaze, shooting him with a jet of fire.

Diablo just stood there as if nothing was happening. Blaze stopped throwing fire and gasped in horror at the unharmed Martian. Diablo chortled at Silver and Blaze.

"Do you think throwing fire at me is supposed to stop me?" he jeered "My strength is too great for the mighty fire to bring me down!"

"Well is it too strong for this?" cried Silver.

He pointed at some huge chunks of floor sticking up and ripped them out of the ground with his psychic powers. He lifted them high above his head and threw them straight at Diablo. Diablo smashed them to pieces with one swing of the mace. However the floor tiles were just a distraction. After Diablo smashed them to pieces, Silver charged straight into him and landed a powerful punch to the face. Diablo staggered backwards and Blaze landed a fiery kick to the face which only made Diablo stagger even more. Then Silver and

Blaze both kicked him in the back of the legs and tripped him up. Diablo dropped his mace and Silver grabbed it.

"Give that back you filthy rat!" roared Diablo.

"No!" retorted Silver "And I'm not a rat! I'm a hedgehog!"

He was about to bring the mace crashing down on Diablo's head but Natasha whacked him in the side with her nunchakus and Silver fell to his knees, dropping the mace and clutching his side. Natasha had hit him with the spiked edge of the nunchaku and left a long thin cut along his side. Natasha snatched the mace away before Silver could retrieve it and she handed it to Diablo.

"Thanks Natasha darling." said Diablo, getting back to his feet.

"You're welcome handsome." purred Natasha "Now why don't me and you finish those cretins off once and for all?"

"Gladly!" crooned Diablo "I'll smash the silver hedgehog thing there; you get the fiery cat thing."

"I'd love to do that." said Natasha, gazing coldly at Blaze with a sadistic smile and her nunchakus at the ready "I've always hated cats."

"I can't say I like you much myself." retorted Blaze calmly.

Blaze and Natasha lunged for each other. Natasha had her nunchakus up to speed and she prepared to whack Blaze with them. Blaze summoned some fire to the palms of her hands and threw some into Natasha's face. The startled Martian fell to the floor and winced in pain. Blaze jumped up and landed a fiery kick onto Natasha's back. Natasha swiped at her with her arm and knocked her off but Blaze landed on her feet (like all cats do) and hit Natasha with a fiery punch. Natasha winced again but she managed to get back to her feet. Blaze charged again but Natasha ripped the long draping cloak from the back of her head wear and threw it into Blaze's face, blinding her. Blaze tripped over a floor tile due to the fact she couldn't see where she was going and Natasha picked up her weapons and spun them around again. He hit Blaze with them

just as she was getting back to her feet so poor Blaze was knocked over again.

As for Silver, he was still in pain from what Natasha did to him and Diablo was ready to smash him to a puddle. He raised his mace and prepared to squash Silver flat. He brought the mace hammering down but something stopped him. It was Lucas! And he was in his battle armour once again and he had stopped Diablo's attack with his long golden sword. Silver was rather surprised to be saved by such a heavily armed Seedrian but seeing as he hadn't seen Lucas in that battle armour, he had no idea it was him. Diablo was less then pleased to see the only Seedrian capable of standing up to him here on the scene once again.

"Dark Oak! You just had to ruin my fun didn't you?" growled Diablo.

"I cannot believe I trusted you fiends for a minute!" growled Dark Oak "I should've known you were lying to us about the whole surrendering and changing your ways scenario!"

"Yes you should have." sneered Diablo "And now we will destroy you Seedrians once and for all!"

Diablo and Dark Oak clashed weapons once again and began to have an out and out brawl with one another. Dark Oak wasn't the only back up Silver and Blaze had, Dark Oak had brought reinforcements. Seedrians stormed the courtroom and began battling it out with the Martian soldiers that merely stood and waited. You see, while the fight had been going on, Earthia had sneaked away and called Lucas to come immediately so Lucas put on his Dark Oak guise and had brought some soldiers to aid Silver and Blaze in battle. Earthia had also informed Lucas of the Mobian's innocence and the fact Cosmo is alive so he wouldn't try and attack Silver and Blaze later. The courtroom was full of flying laser blasts and fighting soldiers. Silver had recovered from Natasha's attack and got up to help Dark Oak. Unfortunately Marik decided to intervene. He struck Silver from behind with an energy wave and sent the silver hedgehog falling over once again.

"I have no idea how you two got here." said Marik "But I don't care. You made such a foolish mistake coming here in hope of helping the

Seedrians defeat us and now you'll die because of it."

"I didn't come here to help the Seedrians win." said Silver "But I may as well now I'm here. And I will make you all pay for what you've done to these innocent people!"

He sent a wave of psychic energy flying at Marik but Marik sent an energy wave flying at Silver and both energy waves struck each other. Then Silver and Marik charged at each other and linked hands. They pushed as hard as they could on one another. Even without psychokinesis, Silver was strong in his own rights but so was Marik so this would be a tough fight. However Silver had psychokinesis so he lifted Marik off the floor with his psychic powers. Then he released Marik and let him drop to the floor to the floor.

"Ouch!" yelped Marik "God I hate people with psychic powers!"

"And I hate injustice!" retorted Silver "So we're even! You Martians will pay for all you've done to peace lovers everywhere!"

"Will you shut up you irritable child?!" snarled Count Drago, ambushing Silver from behind with a sharp kick.

Silver cried in pain and fell on his stomach. Marik laughed at the silver hedgehog.

"Good one Uncle Drago!" he said with a wicked smirk on his face.

"It was my most humble pleasure my dear nephew." said Count Drago "Now both of us will vanquish that accursed hedgehog together."

Silver struggled back to his feet as Marik and the Count surrounded him on either side. He looked worried.

"Oh come on! Two against one isn't fair!" whined Silver.

"Says the one who required a fiery associate to help him face me in combat!" noted Count Drago bitterly "So me and Marik can take the pleasure of being unfair ourselves."

Marik and Count Drago charged at the surrounded hedgehog but

Silver levitated out of the way, leaving the two Martians to accidentally crash into each other headfirst and knock each other out.

"Duh I'm stupid!" droned Marik as he lay there dazed and confused.

"Why does my head have such a tremendously sharp flush of pain flowing through it?" wondered Count Drago dopily.

Silver lifted the dazed Martians both up off the ground with psychic energy and held them there while he wondered on something.

"Now where can I toss them?" he wondered.

He eyed Natasha Martian who was still brawling it out with Blaze. Blaze threw streaks of fire at here but she merely slashed through the fire with her nunchakus. Silver decided to help his friend out so he drew his arm back and thrust it forward. Marik and Drago were propelled straight into Natasha who didn't see them in time and ended up getting piled on by them.

"Nice one Silver." said Blaze with a smile.

"Thank you." said Silver.

Unfortunately, that didn't keep the demon woman down for long. Natasha threw the boys off of herself and growled like a sea witch. Marik and Drago got back to their feet and growled with her.

"That does it!" growled Natasha "You two are doing to pay for this dearly!"

"No one throws me at my mother and lives!" roared Marik.

"And no one will have the satisfaction of making me look like a complete imbecile!" hissed Count Drago.

"Let's get them boys!" screeched Natasha.

Silver and Blaze got into battle ready stances and prepared to charge.

"We'll take you ALL on!" declared Silver hotly.

The three Martians and two Mobians charged at each other like thundering rhinos charging at their attackers. Count Drago landed in between Silver and Blaze upside down and did a perfect split so he kicked them both. Natasha whacked the stunned Silver with the hard side of the nunchaku and Marik slashed Blaze across the face with his metal hand. Blaze was quick to retaliate with a gush of fire to the face and Marik staggered backwards.

Count Drago and Natasha both punched Silver together but the moment they tried again, Silver halted them with psychic energy and levitated above their heads. He charged into Natasha with a flying kick to the forehead and sent her flying backwards. Count Drago swiped at Silver but he missed and Silver elbowed him in the stomach. Count Drago wheeled over and Silver took his helmet off so he could whack him on the head without hurting his fist. Then Silver walloped Drago with his own helmet and threw it away. Natasha grabbed Silver by the arms and tossed him into the wall but Silver saved himself from the impact by halting himself with psychic energy. Drago put his helmet back on and charged straight at Silver. Silver leaped out of the way but Count Drago was an agile creature so he quickly turned around and lunged for him. Silver slowed him down with psychic energy and punched Count Drago in the organic part of his face. Natasha grabbed Silver's feet and spun him around. She let go and Silver hurtled straight into Blaze who was fending Marik off with a circle of fire. The two Mobians squealed in surprise as they were knocked over. Marik decided to leave Blaze and go for Silver. He grabbed Silver by the chest fur and held him above his head.

Blaze tried to intervene but Count Drago yanked on her robe and pulled her back. Blaze elbowed him in the gut but Count Drago got his own back with a knee to the gut. Blaze kicked at Drago but the powerful Count grabbed her leg and threw it upwards, sending Blaze wheeling backwards and into Natasha, who kicked her away. Blaze lay on her back, spluttering hard as she tried to catch her breath. Count Drago lunged at Blaze, his organic eye showing a lot of anger and rage. Blaze recovered just in time to deliver a kangaroo kick to the face which brought Count Drago crashing down. Then Blaze

yanked on his long flowing brown cape and proceeded to set it on fire. Count Drago tore his cape off to save himself from getting burnt and threw it at Blaze in an attempt to burn her. Blaze quickly snapped her fingers to put the cape out. The charred blackened ragged cape fell to the floor.

"I'll teach you to wreck my prized possession!" roared Count Drago "I'll make sure you die a lovely gruesome death!"

"And I'll make sure you go down hard enough to wound your pride forever." retorted Blaze.

She and Count Drago stared at each other, ready to charge. Unfortunately Natasha kicked her from behind and then elbowed her on the head, knocking the poor cat out. Blaze collapsed onto her back.

"She's such a bad kitty isn't she Drago?" chuckled Natasha.

"Yes she is." agreed the Count "Now let's kill her before she wakes up."

He straightened his hand and out of his sleeve appeared a long thin dagger with a shiny silver blade. He held it firmly by the handle.

"I'll stab her in the heart." said Count Drago wickedly "That's the best way to ensure the death of our enemies."

"Do what you like." said Natasha with an uninterested tone in her voice "I hate cats so kill her anyway you like."

Drago nodded and prepared to stab Blaze. And he would have done if Silver hadn't thrown Marik the Martian into him. The dagger spun into the air and Silver caught it with his psychokinesis. Using his powers, he snapped the dagger in two and let it drop to the floor in pieces. Silver was very mad now.

"That's the last straw!" he screamed "You can hurt me, kick me, punch me and knock me out all you like! But no one tries to kill my friend!"

"Do you want us to severely hurt you?" asked Count Drago

"Because if you do, I'll be happy to oblige!"

"Same here!" sneered Marik.

"Do you possibly think you can take all three of us on at once?" challenged Natasha.

"I can take a whole army of you on!" claimed Silver "You three are just a warm up."

The three Martians all charged at Silver at once but the psychic hedgehog ripped up a giant chunk of floor with his psychokinesis and used it as a shield to hold them back. It held them back just long enough for Silver to leap over them in a perfect rainbow arch and land behind them. Silver ripped up more chunks of floor and tossed them at Marik, Drago and Natasha. The three Martians were bombarded with rubble and were soon taken out of commission. Silver panted heavily. He was exhausted but he managed to punch the air with triumph.

"How about that?" he gasped "I bet three of ya at once!"

Blaze, who had recovered from Natasha's attack, got back to her feet and staggered weakly over to Silver.

"Those Martians are tough." she said hoarsely.

"Yeah but not tough enough for us!" boasted Silver "If just the two of us are a match for three important Martians then the invasion of Mobius is bound to fail!"

Blaze nodded in agreement. Maybe Silver was right, if she and Silver were managing to do well against Marik, Natasha and Drago then Sonic and all his friends together would be more then a match for the Martians. But if the Martian invasion of Mobius does get stopped then does that mean the Martian invasion wasn't the cause of hers and Silver's dystopian future?

As for Diablo, he and Dark Oak had been clashing it out man-to-man with their weapons. Their fight had been going on for fifteen whole minutes and their weapons showed no signs of giving in. Diablo's mace could stand up to titanium and Dark Oak's sword was stronger

then steel so those weapons would last a while. Diablo and Dark Oak clashed weapons and glared at each other as they pushed on each other's weapons.

"Truly, if you're so powerful and mighty…" said Dark Oak dryly "Would this contest be not over?"

"This contest isn't over until the weakest succumbs!" roared Diablo "And that will be you!"

Dark Oak drew his sword back and tried to plunge it into Diablo's stomach but Diablo's body armour was strong enough to resist a well aimed strike from a sword. Diablo smacked the sword away and actually knocked it out of Dark Oak's hands! Seeing as his opponent was weapon less, Diablo whacked Dark Oak squarely on the head with his mace. He bent the spike on the top of the helmet and smashed the spike on the left side of the helmet's circular eye clean off. Diablo tried to whack him again but Dark Oak grabbed the mace and flipped Diablo over himself and onto the floor. Despite this, Diablo didn't let go of his mace. Dark Oak ran off to retrieve his sword but Diablo smashed the floor with his mace and made the ground shake so much Dark Oak tumbled over. Luckily, he landed straight in front of his sword so he could grab it. Dark Oak got back up and Diablo charged at him, ready for another attack. Diablo brought his mace crashing down but Dark Oak defended himself with his sword. Then Dark Oak kicked Diablo in the stomach and before Diablo could recover, Dark Oak slashed at him. He caught the mace just below the head and chopped it clean off! Now Diablo was weapon less! Dark Oak lunged at Diablo, ready for the killer strike but Diablo punched him in the green orb on his chest, cracking it and sending Dark Oak falling onto his back. Dark Oak had dropped his sword and Diablo grabbed it. He pointed the golden sword at Dark Oak's throat and smiled at his victim.

"Isn't it ironic how I'm going to kill you with your own weapon?" he laughed "Such a pity though. You were a worthy opponent Dark Oak but it's time for your battle career to end."

He raised the sword and prepared to plunge it through Dark Oak's armour and kill him but Silver snatched it out of his hands with his psychic powers. Diablo growled at the fact he had just lost the

opportunity to kill his worst enemy and turned to face Silver.

"Why must you mongrels interfere with my moment of triumph?" he groaned angrily.

"Because we save the day like all heroes do." retorted Silver "Now give up and I won't use this sword on you."

"Never!" snarled Diablo.

He prepared to attack. Marik, Natasha and Count Drago shoved the pile of rubble off of themselves and stood up very straight.

"Don't worry Dad, we'll help you!" cried Marik.

"No you won't." said Count Drago "I will help Diablo…alone."

"Drago you dipstick!" screeched Natasha "You can hardly stand up to those nitwits by yourself so don't be such a moron and let us help you!"

"No." said Count Drago "I will do it alone, for I have these…"

He whipped out two Energy Diamonds that were stored in pouches on the back of his belt. Marik stared in amazement and knew what was coming. The Seedrians and Martians stopped fighting and stared at Count Drago. Silver and Blaze watched as Count Drago held the diamonds in front of himself and tapped into their power.

"Drago! Be careful brother!" cried Diablo.

"I have experimented with these intriguing diamonds for months on end and I have been able to control the power of two diamonds successfully without error." stated Drago "Now I shall end the Mobians and every Seedrian in this room!"

He held the diamonds to his chest and the glowing gems swallowed him up in a ball of light that engulfed the entire room. Silver and Blaze shielded their eyes from the blinding dazzle that surrounded the room. After the light died down, a brand new figure was revealed. It was a shiny silver coloured beast with three horns, spiked wrist bands, bands of light just below the knee, two long

sharp tentacles that were attached to its shoulders, three spikes on each foot, an opening compartment on its chest and two thin horrible red optics that would strike fear into even the most brave-hearted of people. Everybody gasped in awe at this new creature. Marik and Diablo both smiled as they knew what it was.

" **You heathens have barely witnessed my full power!** " boomed the metallic figure " **Now you shall witness the true power of Metal Drago!** "

"Oh yeah?" said Silver "I bet you're just as easy to take down!"

"Men! Get him!" ordered Dark Oak.

Silver, Blaze, Dark Oak and all the Seedrians charged towards Metal Drago, screaming at the top of their voices. Metal Drago just stood there and let them come to him. The moment they were within five feet of him Metal Drago opened his chest compartment and let out a tremendous blast of red energy that blew everybody away as if they were leaves in the wind. The blast tore a giant hole into the courtroom and everybody was blown out of the room and directly outside. Everybody landed on the ground had and sharply but everybody survived that ordeal. Silver and Blaze gasped in astonishment.

"Whoa!" cried Silver "All that power from just two diamonds!"

"Did you know they could do that?" shrieked Blaze.

"No." said Silver "The book I read didn't have that information."

Metal Drago lunged outside and landed in the centre of where everybody had landed. He sent an earthquake rippling through the ground and several soldiers were tossed into the air. The ground began to crack and the cracks were so wide, some Seedrians fell down them. Silver almost fell down one but Blaze caught him and pulled him back up. Dark Oak got back up and tried to strike Metal Drago with his sword but Metal Drago was invulnerable so Dark Oak's sword merely smashed to little bits upon striking him.

"Impossible!" shrieked Dark Oak "How can this be?!"

" **I'm invulnerable in this form.** " sneered Metal Drago " **Victory over me is impossible.** "

And with that he slashed Dark Oak's armour with his sharp metal tentacles. Then he wrapped one tentacle around Dark Oak's leg and held him upside down.

" **I'm going to enjoy this show of amusement you lot are putting on for me right now!** " he chortled " **And I'm going to enjoy killing you all even more! And I'm going to start with you!** "

He threw Dark Oak into the ground as hard as he could. Silver tried to intervene by using his psychokinesis to halt him but Metal Drago, just like his original self, broke free of the psychic hold.

" **If you couldn't stop me with your psychic powers in my original form, what makes you think you have a chance against me in this form?!** " roared Metal Drago " **Just for that, I'm going to kill you first!** "

He charged at Silver like a speeding bullet and whacked him away with his shoulder mounted tentacles. Silver was sent cart wheeling into the air and he came crashing down on the ground. Blaze attacked Metal Drago with a fiery kick but the kick didn't even tickle Metal Drago due to his strong metallic form. Drago slapped Blaze away and sent her crashing into the ground. Diablo, Natasha and Marik watched the whole performance from the corners of the battlefield. They were enjoying this display from the super powered Count greatly.

"I think I like Drago better in this form." said Diablo.

"He's defiantly going to destroy everybody isn't he?" said Natasha darkly.

"One thing puzzles me dad." said Marik "Why didn't Uncle Drago do this to start with?"

"Maybe he was waiting for the right moment to use it." suggested Diablo "But who cares? Now he's in that form, victory over this planet is certain."

"Agreed." said Marik with a cruel sadistic smile on his face.

As for the fight, Seedrian soldiers feebly blasted at Metal Drago but the metal monster just stood there as if nothing was happening. Then he dashed through the Seedrian army faster then a diving falcon and sent the poor soldiers flying in different directions. Dark Oak tried to grapple with Metal Drago but Drago's strength was too great so he broke free from Dark Oak's grapple and threw him away. Silver and Blaze just watched the battle helplessly.

"This is impossible!" cried Silver "No one can beat that guy! Not even Lucas!"

"Argh! If only I'd brought the Sol Emeralds with me!" moaned Blaze "Then me or you could power up and fight him!"

"Wait a minute…" said Silver, thinking fast "That's it! I'll use Earthia's warp ring to go back to our time zone and fetch the emeralds!"

"Brilliant idea Silver!" cried Blaze "But you'll have to get past the Metal Martian first."

"No probs, he's distracted by those poor Seedrians, he won't see me." said Silver.

He flew off and headed towards Dark Oak. He had no idea where Earthia would be right now but he knew Dark Oak had an idea. Dark Oak lay there, battered and beaten by the insidious metal count and watched his soldiers fall before the Count. Silver landed beside him and asked

"Do you know where Earthia is?"

"She will be hiding in the cellar from the Martians." croaked Dark Oak weakly "Why?"

"I have a plan and I need her." said Silver "I'll be right back."

And with that, he flew off again and headed towards the palace. Diablo, Natasha and Marik were so intrigued by the battle they failed to notice Silver sneaking into the palace. Silver had no idea where the cellar was but he was determined to find it and he had a good

idea where the cellar was. He flew through the corridors and found a brown wooden door. He opened it and saw Earthia sitting there, praying for this madness to end. She was surprised to see Silver standing at the door.

"Oh Silver." she said "Is the fight over?"

"No." said Silver "But it will be. I need your Super Warp Ring."

"OK here you go." said Earthia, handing it to him "Why ever do you need this in a time like this?"

"I have something that can help me but it's back home so I need to warp there and get it." said Silver.

He flicked the warp ring and into the air and the ring expanded to twice it's size. Then Silver walked through the ring and found himself back in his own time line, just the same as before, wrecked and post apocalyptic. To Silver's luck he was in the very place he wanted, AngelIsland and right where the shrine was. He scooped up all seven Sol Emeralds and reactivated the warp ring. He stepped through it and found himself back in the battlefield. The fight was going no better for the Seedrians being as Metal Drago was still defeating them all and he had even killed some of them. Blaze had been valiantly trying to help but Metal Drago had beaten her into submission. Silver was more mad then ever now.

"HEY!" he shouted "Metal face! Get your shiny butt over here!"

Metal Drago stopped beating up a poor Seedrian soldier, dropped him and stomped over to Silver, the ground cracking with every step he took. He loomed over the silver hedgehog angrily.

"Why don't you pick on someone who has the strength to fight you?!" yelled Silver.

Metal Drago laughed at him.

" **I'll be more then happy to do so hedgehog!** " he cackled " **I'm going to enjoy impaling you and slashing you over and over until the will to live has diminished!** "

"Stop boasting you egotistical jerk!" snapped Silver "This fight will be one on one, me and you. And I will kick your shiny butt outta here!"

" **You, you arrogant, over confident, irritating little brat!** " growled Metal Drago " **You have a death wish if you so much as think you can defeat me!** "

"I don't think I can defeat you, I know I will!" scoffed Silver "Especially since I have gems of power myself!"

He revealed the seven Sol Emeralds. Before anybody could do anything Silver held spread his arms out and the seven rectangular gems began to circle around and around Silver at an incredible pace. Blaze recovered from her beating and opened here eyes just in time to see what was happening. Like Sonic and Shadow, Silver had a super form. His eyes turned red, his fur turned gold and his two back quills curled straight up. Metal Drago got into a battle ready stance and Super Silver glared down at his opponent.

"I'm gonna beat the metal outta ya!" declared Super Silver as he and the metallic Martian prepared to do battle…

Looks like we have an epic battle on our hands people! Super Silver vs. Metal Drago! Who will win this titanic contest? Tune in for the grand finale to this arc!

All's Fair in Warfare 4

Arc 15: All's Fair in Warfare

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 119-120

Part 4

Everybody stared up at the incredible scene above them. The sky was filled with golden and silver blurs constantly bashing into one another, creating sparks of colour that flashed and sparkled everywhere as the blurs made contact with one another. Even Diablo, Natasha and Marik were enthralled by the battle in the sky.

"Hey Marik, did you know Mobians could do that?" asked Diablo.

"No I didn't." said Marik "But I've heard rumours that Sonic the Hedgehog was capable of this kind of power."

"Who cares if that silver nuisance is all golden and super powerful now?" scoffed Natasha "That doesn't mean he's going to defeat dear old Count Drago."

"Agreed." said Diablo "My brother will smash that annoying brat into rock paste!"

But Diablo was seriously wrong. Just like Super Sonic and Super Shadow or indeed any other super form, Super Siler was invulnerable so Metal Drago wouldn't be able to cause any grievous bodily harm with his sharp metal tentacles. Super Silver and Metal Drago charged at each other again and knocked each other away. Metal Drago appeared to be getting exhausted but Super Silver didn't seem the least bit tired.

"Come on, you can't be worn out yet!" laughed Super Silver "I'm just getting started!"

Metal Drago glared at Silver with his thin red optics. Then he opened

his chest compartment and let fly a tremendous blast of energy just like before. But being super, Silver wasn't harmed much by the blast and in super form, Silver's psychokinesis was even stronger then before so he used his psychic powers on the blast of energy and pushed it back into Metal Drago. Metal Drago shielded himself as he was engulfed by red focused energy. After the energy died down, Super Silver charged straight into Metal Drago's stomach and sent him flying backwards through the air. Metal Drago growled and charged at Silver. Super Silver just held his hands out and halted him with his psychic powers. Even though Metal Drago could overcome psychokinesis before, Super Silver's psychokinesis was too strong even for other super forms. Only god-like entities would be able to break out of a hold this strong. Silver swung his arms down and sent Metal Drago shooting down into the ground like a meteor. Metal Drago crashed face first into the ground and made a small wide crater. Blaze surrounded the crater with a ring of fire just to distract him while Super Silver prepared for another attack. Metal Drago got onto his hands and knees and gazed up at the sky. Super Silver charged down from the sky like a whizzing arrow and he aimed for Metal Drago. Metal Drago lunged through the ring of fire, actually catching some in his shiny metal claws, and left Super Silver to crash into the ground. Super Silver made the crater then bigger now! Before Super Silver could recover, Metal Drago threw the fire into his eyes to distract him. Super Silver cried out in surprise and then Metal Drago leaped onto him. He wrestled Super Silver to the ground and held him in a chokehold.

"Let me go you shiny pain in the neck!" chocked Silver.

" **Not likely you golden rat!** " growled Metal Drago " **I know super forms and I know they cannot last forever. Even mine cannot so I'm going to keep you held here until your power famishes and then I'll smash you into the dirt until you are unfit to live!** "

"Guess again metal brain!" cried Super Silver.

Using his super enhanced powers, he wrenched Metal Drago off of himself and threw him away. Metal Drago got back to his feet and crouched down on all fours like a tiger ready to pounce.

"Silver, watch out!" cried Blaze.

Super Silver was ready for him. Metal Drago charged at him at blinding speed, claws bared and tentacles at the ready. Super Silver merely used his psychic powers on the ground and tore a chunk out of it. He lifted it in front of himself and left it for Metal Drago to smash into while he dodged him. Metal Drago smashed the chunk to pieces, leaving Super Silver the opportunity to charge at him head first. Metal Drago was sent rolling over and over before falling down the crater he and Super Silver had created. The Martians were not enjoying this fight at all.

"So much for Count Creep-ula will smash golden boy into rock paste." sniffed Natasha, folding her arms.

"Golden boy's stronger then I thought." said Diablo "We should give Drago a hand! Come on you two, we're going to help Count Drago!"

"Dad I know you're not very bright but that's the stupidest idea you've ever come up with!" blurted Marik "We can't possibly take on a super form by ourselves if Uncle Drago is having trouble taking on a super form in his super form!"

"Don't you dare talk to your father like that!" snarled Diablo.

"Diablo you dunce, Marik is right!" snapped Natasha "If Count Drago in a super form is having trouble taking on a super powered Mobian, then we have no chance!"

Diablo resisted the urge to smash his wife into the ground like a hammer hitting a nail. He knew Natasha and his son were both right.

"OK my idea was stupid." muttered Diablo "But what are we gonna do to help Count Drago?"

"Maybe we should attack the fiery cat woman just to catch the super hedgehog's attention." suggested Marik "He can't resist the urge to help those in need."

"Great idea Marik!" cried Natasha "It's really ironic how your own son is cleverer then you hunky chops." she teasingly said to Diablo who only fumed at her.

"If you dare insult me again darling I'll give you a migraine that will

last for twenty years!" he roared.

"Yeah, yeah." muttered Natasha, not impressed by her husband's threats "Just come on, your brother needs help."

Diablo, Natasha and Marik all ran out into the battlefield. Blaze stood there watching Super Silver and Metal Drago pound each other's heads in.

Metal Drago got some well aimed strikes with his tentacles but the only thing he could to was make Super Silver grimace at the most due to the fact he was invulnerable. If he was normal Silver, Metal Drago would have covered him with long thin cuts. Super Silver used his psychokinesis to halt Metal Drago's tentacles and then proceeded to make the tentacles whack Metal Drago. Metal Drago staggered backwards and Super Silver leaped on him. He grabbed the tentacles with his hands and tugged on them as if he was trying to pull them off. Metal Drago clawed him around the face and then head-butted Super Silver just before he could fall over in pain. Super Silver recovered and flew back up into the sky. Metal Drago flew after him. Super Silver used his psychokinesis to lift up huge chunks of rubble and surround himself with them. The rubble circled around him. Metal Drago could see through Silver's plan and changed tactics. Instead of charging straight into Silver and his rubble barrier, he flew through the air in a rainbow arch and headed towards Silver from the top where he wasn't protected. Super Silver saw him coming and lifted the rubble up over himself and then shoved it all into Metal Drago's face. Metal Drago spiralled through the air like a crazy bird. Super Silver charged for him and hit him as hard as he could before he could finish spiralling.

Down on the ground, Diablo, Natasha and Marik were creeping up on Blaze and surprisingly, the cat was so focused on watching Super Silver and Metal Drago fight each other she failed to notice them. Then without warning, Marik leaped on Blaze and pinned her down on the ground. He forced her arms behind her back and held them there.

"Hey! Get off me you demon!" yelped Blaze.

"I think not little kitty!" sneered Marik, grinning like a weevil "We

aren't gonna stand by and let Uncle Drago get beaten by your stupid boyfriend so we are using you to distract him!"

Blaze tried to get Marik off of her but the little Martian had a strong grasp. Then Diablo crouched down beside her and pretended he was going to whack her on the head with his fist.

"Silver!" cried Blaze "Help!"

Super Silver stopped what he was doing and saw that Blaze was in trouble. The moment he turned his back on Metal Drago, Metal Drago wrapped a sharp tentacle around his neck and squeezed as hard as he could. Then Metal Drago held Super Silver up to his face and began throwing punches at him all over. Then he let go of Silver and unleashed his energy blast from his chest again and since Silver was directly in front of it, he felt the full power and force of that blast. Super Silver was blasted away and sent cart-wheeling through the air. Metal Drago laughed at him and flew after him at the speed of light.

" **Not so cocky when your attention is diverted hey golden boy?** " he taunted.

Super Silver stopped cart-wheeling but Metal Drago arrived too quick for him to recover and bashed him on the head with both his fists clenched together. Super Silver shot into the ground like a diver leaping into water. Count Drago followed with his arms in front of him and spinning around like a drill tip. He hit Super Silver full on and sent a huge wave of rubble and dust flying everywhere. Blaze was horrified to watch this happen and she got so angry her whole body was set alight by her own flames! Marik leaped off of Blaze and hopped about madly, trying to cool himself off. Blaze leapt to her feet.

"I get it now." said Blaze icily "You're gonna attack me to attract Silver's attention and that way Metal Drago can pummel him! Well it won't work so there!"

"It just did you fiery nuisance!" snapped Marik as he dusted himself off.

"Well it won't work again." said Blaze "If you want me, you'll have to catch me."

And with that Blaze ran off, leaving a trial of fire behind as she did so. Blaze could run almost as fast as Sonic so the Martians would have a tough time catching up with her. Marik could run fast thanks to his jet shoes so he ran after the blazing kitty. No sooner had the chase began, Marik had already managed to catch up with Blaze but the pyrokinetic cat didn't seem worried the slightest. Soon the two racing rivals were side by side. Marik glared at Blaze with his orange eyes.

"So you think your fast do you?" he sneered.

"I don't think I'm fast, I know I am." said Blaze "Albeit not as fast as Sonic. And I have the one thing you don't have."

"Oh and what's that then you fiery feline?" crooned Marik.

"This!" cried Blaze.

She threw fire directly into Marik's path and he ran straight through it. His shoes were set alight and he tumbled over himself in a roly-poly. He blew on his shoes to put the fire out and before he could do that, Blaze seized him by the collar and threw him into the air where Super Silver and Metal Drago resumed their contest. Marik crashed directly into Metal Drago and sent him spinning backwards in the air. Super Silver saw the opportunity to wallop the two Martians with waves of psychic energy. Marik fell from the sky. Metal Drago didn't want his nephew to get hurt so he flew down to catch Marik and lower him safely to the ground. Super Silver just chuckled.

"Who knew Martians were so concerned for one another?" he chuckled.

Metal Drago put Marik down on his feet and Marik dusted himself off.

"Thanks Uncle Drago." he said.

" **Don't mention it nephew.** " boomed Metal Drago " **After all, I couldn't stand by and let my brother's beloved son fall to his**

death could I? "

"Of course not." said Marik. Then he saw Super Silver flying towards him and shrieked "Uncle! Behind you!"

Metal Drago turned around just in time to catch Super Silver. Super Silver pushed him a good distance backwards across the war-torn terrain but Metal Drago remained strong and kept it up. Then he threw Super Silver backwards but he didn't crash into anything. Then the two fighters linked arms and wrestled with one another.

"Finally, you're putting up a decent fight!" jeered Super Silver "Where you just holding back earlier?"

" **You were lucky with your onslaughts earlier.** " growled Metal Drago " **But this time, you will not be so lucky! I will unleash my full power!** "

"No you won't!" shouted Super Silver "You may be insanely powerful but I have psychokinesis!"

Using his psychic powers, he levitated the metal Martian off the ground and proceeded to whack him into the ground, then lift him up again and through him back down. He began to do this over and over again until Marik decided to interfere by throwing a rock at him. The rock didn't hurt Super Silver but it did make him turn around and his attention on Metal Drago focused over to Marik instead, causing him to drop the metal Count. Seizing his chance, Metal Drago grabbed Silver with his shoulder mounted tentacles and proceeded to constantly smash him into the ground by lifting him over his head and then smashing him down on the ground head first. Like Silver, he kept this up for several seconds before Super Silver finally managed to break free of his grasp with psychokinesis. The poor hedgehog's head was in a daze and his vision wasn't very focused right now. Metal Drago laughed at the dazed hedgehog.

" **You're weakening now hedgehog!** " he crowed " **Soon it'll all be over for you. And I will claim my rightful and well deserved victory over your wretched filth!** "

"You know what, that growly voice is getting on my nerves!" growled

Super Silver "I think it's time I shut you up!"

Yet again, Super Silver used his psychic energy to throw some rocks at Metal Drago. Metal Drago merely smashed them to pieces and he and Super Silver charged at each other again.

Meanwhile Blaze was keeping Marik busy to stop him from interfering with Super Silver's battle. She blasted fire at him and Marik held his hands up to defend himself. Blaze forced him backwards as her fire raged on.

"I do wish my voltage compactor wasn't broken!" he moaned "That way I could electrocute that infernal cat!"

Blaze stopped blasting Marik with fire and then landed a fiery kick on his head. The kick was so powerful, Marik's helmet was dented and the Martian staggered backwards and fell on his bottom. That didn't keep him down for long though, Marik leapt back to his feet and smacked Blaze with an energy wave. Blaze was thrown on to her back. Marik leaped on Blaze and grabbed her neck. He was trying the old throttle method. Blaze tried as hard as she could to wrench Marik off of her neck but the Martian held on tight. Marik's grip was tighter then a wrench so it was hard to free yourself from his grasp. Blaze knew she couldn't get Marik off by trying to free herself from his grasp so she tried another way. She surrounded herself with her own fire. Marik leaped off of Blaze as the searing heat scorched him. He ran around madly to cool himself down. Blaze put herself out and charged at Marik in the style of Sonic the Hedgehog. She hit the burnt Martian and sent him wheeling over onto his face. Unfortunately, Blaze's victory wouldn't last. Diablo and Natasha had caught up to her and Marik and now they decided to intervene. Blaze groaned in annoyance.

"Why can't you two just give it up already?" she sighed "We all know who's going to win this fight."

"Yes we do and it'll be us!" boomed Diablo "I may not have my mace but my raw muscle power will squash you like a bug!"

"And I'll make sure these nunchakus cut you nice and badly." said Natasha wickedly, pulling out her weapons.

Blaze did not seem bothered by this.

"If I were you two I'd stop boasting about myself and give it up." she said "And by the way, I think you should look out."

"Don't tell us what to do worm!" snarled Diablo "I think you should have one of my special knuckle…"

Before he could finish he was suddenly knocked off his feet by a falling Metal Drago landing on his back. Super Silver had thrown him down with his psychic energy. The two Martians groaned whereas Natasha laughed at them.

"Nice one Silver." said Blaze "Diablo was beginning to bore me to death right now."

"No problem Blaze." said Super Silver "Metal Drago was beginning to get on my nerves with that stupid growly voice."

Metal Drago got up and off of Diablo so Diablo could get back to his feet. Metal Drago spotted Blaze nearby and had a wicked idea. Before anyone could so much as blink, Metal Drago lashed out at Super Silver with a sharp tentacle and sent him spiralling away. Then Metal Drago wrapped his tentacle around Blaze's waist and lifted her off the ground. Blaze struggled helplessly in the metal Martian's grasp. Super Silver charged back at Metal Drago, ready to pound his head in. He noticed he had Blaze in his grasp and ground to a halt.

"Hey, you let go of Blaze right now!" yelled Super Silver.

" **You will cede to my demands and power yourself down.** " retorted Metal Drago " **Because if you don't, I will make sure this feisty feline will suffocate oh so beautifully!** "

And with that he began to tighten his grip around Blaze. His tentacle squeezed on her so hard she began to yelp and splutter as all the air in her lungs began to diminish.

"Silver…" spluttered Blaze "Don't do…it…you've…gotta…finish… him…"

"But I can't let him kill you." protested Super Silver "I don't know what I'd do without you."

"Silver…if you…give in…to…his…demands…he'll…kill us any…way!" gasped Blaze "You…need…to…finish him…off!"

" **Come on golden boy, will you power down and relinquish your victory to me?** " said Metal Drago, his voice all soft and dangerous sounding " **Or will I suffocate this feisty feline?** "

"No!" cried Super Silver "Because I am going to do this!"

Using his super enhanced psychokinesis, he unwrapped Metal Drago's tentacle from around Blaze. Now Blaze was free from the insidious Count and Super Silver was OK to attack since Blaze's life wasn't at risk. Metal Drago grumbled in defeat.

" **How did I forget about his psychic powers?** " he grumbled.

"Maybe you're just stupid." jeered Super Silver "Now shall we finish this once and for all with no more interruptions?"

" **With pleasure!** " Metal Drago roared with delight " **I shall vanquish you with or without assistance from my brother or anyone else.** "

"Drago, you need our help and you know it!" bellowed Diablo "So stop being stupid and let us help you beat this annoying little brat!"

" **I said I will vanquish that accursed hedgehog without assistance and that's the end of it!** " snapped Metal Drago " **He's weakening so I'll be able to gain on edge on him!** "

"But if he's weakening then so are you Uncle!" cried Marik.

" **He's weakening more then I am.** " claimed Metal Drago " **He'll run out of super power before I do.** "

"We'll see about that won't we?" said Super Silver challengingly.

He charged straight into the metal Martian's stomach at blinding speed and sent him hurtling backwards. Metal Drago ground to a

halt using his feet and charged back at Silver. Super Silver halted him with his psychokinesis and threw him away again. Metal Drago landed on his feet and Super Silver charged at him, ready for another blow. Metal Drago whacked him away with his shoulder mounted tentacles and sent him diving into the ground. Super Silver shot straight through the ground and made a long trial. Then Metal Drago leaped on his back and began to throw heavy punches on the super powered hedgehog. All this heavy pounding was making it difficult for Silver to concentrate so he couldn't use his psychokinesis on him. Then Metal Drago scooped him up with his tentacles and threw him away. Super Silver spiralled through the air like a spinning top and Metal Drago leaped up into the air to attack him again. He clasped his fists together and walloped Super Silver in the stomach, sending him shooting down into the ground like a bird falling from the sky. Metal Drago held his arms out straight over his head; he straightened his body and spun around in drill fashion. Super Silver was deeply embedded into the ground so he couldn't get up. The spinning Metal Drago hurtled down towards Silver, still spinning like a drill. The metal Martian finally hit the ground but he didn't stop there, he was pushing Super Silver straight down through the earth, still spinning. The pushing went on for about twenty feet before Metal Drago's attack finally stopped.

The metal Martian had dug a hole twenty feet deep after his attack on Super Silver so he had a long climb back to the surface. Luckily he didn't need to since Super Silver recovered and punched him straight out of the hole and then flew out after him. The two fighters burst out of the hole and Super Silver landed some furious blows onto Metal Drago while they were shooting upwards. Metal Drago was bombarded with kicks and punches too fast for the naked eye to see but he managed to hold up against them. Then Metal Drago opened up his chest compartment and blasted Super Silver with an enormous ball of energy. Super Silver was thrown backwards but he was alright. The blast finished and Metal Drago's chest compartment closed. Suddenly, that gave Super Silver an idea. He charged straight into Metal Drago and the two grappled with each other. As they struggled amongst each other, Super Silver grabbed Metal Drago's chest compartment and using all his might, forced it open. Metal Drago got furious and smacked him away. Unfortunately for him, now Silver had forced his compartment open when it isn't

supposed to be, it was stuck open now, leaving his insides vulnerable. Metal Drago tried to force it shut but Super Silver used his psychokinesis to keep his arms off. He picked up some rocks with his psychic powers and threw them straight at the open compartment. Metal Drago roared in pain as the rocks hit his vulnerable parts. Metal Drago furiously tried to blast Super Silver with the energy blast from his chest, which still worked even if the chest compartment was stuck open. Super Silver narrowly dodged the blast and only managed to singe the tip of his boot and he flew around looking for another weapon he could use. That's when he spotted Dark Oak's broken sword lying next to the unconscious Dark Oak who seemed to be in a really bad state. Super Silver picked up the sword half that didn't have the handle and flew back up to the furious Metal Drago who had just finished using his power blast. He found out Super Silver had vanished and looked around wildly.

" **Don't play hiding games golden boy!** " he growled " **Come and face me you wretched coward!** "

"Drago I'm over here you dunce!" called Super Silver.

Metal Drago turned around and saw Super Silver taunting him. Metal Drago charged at Super Silver with his tentacles ready to slice him to pieces. Super Silver aimed at Metal Drago and threw the sword half at him. It pinged off his shoulder instead of hitting him in the chest and it begun to spiral down to the ground. Super Silver chased after it but Metal Drago caught him with a furious swipe of the tentacle. Then he slashed him but being invulnerable, Silver didn't get any cuts. Then Metal Drago wrapped a tentacle around Super Silver's leg and began to swing him around his head. He stopped swinging Silver around and threw him straight up. Then he flew after him and using a dropkick, sent Super Silver flying straight down. Metal Drago flew after him again and punched him so hard he was sent flying straight back up again. Super Silver halted himself with psychokinesis and waited for Metal Drago to attack. Metal Drago came blasting towards him at top speed. Much too fast for Super Silver to stop him with psychic powers but not fast enough to stop Super Silver from attacking him. Super Silver landed a well aimed blow straight in the middle of Metal Drago's face and sent the metal monster flying backwards in somersaults. Then Super Silver

punched him again and sent him flying just to make sure he was far enough away from him so he could retrieve the sword piece. Super Silver flew towards the ground and looked for the sword piece he tried to use on Metal Drago. He found it lying next to the crater he and Metal Drago had created earlier. Super Silver picked it up with psychic powers and flew back into the air, waiting for Metal Drago to strike. Metal Drago came hurtling towards him, tentacles poised and ready for attack. Metal Drago lunged at him but Super Silver used the sword bit to protect himself. Metal Drago lunched some punches and tentacles slashes at Super Silver but the super hedgehog managed to protect himself with his own punches. Then the two grappled hands with one another and began to push on each other.

" **Once I rip you apart time traveller,** " boomed Metal Drago " **I will finish off your kitty friend, then I will obliterate the Seedrians and then the Martians shall be drowning in victory! And it will be all because of my super powers and your defeat!** "

"Ungh…NEVER!" cried Super Silver.

He blasted the metal Martian with waves of psychic energy and then proceeded to kick him in the open chest compartment, breaking the opening hatches so now the compartment can never be closed again. Metal Drago desperately tried another blast of energy on Super Silver but yet again, the hedgehog dodged the enormous blast. Super Silver flew around behind Metal Drago and kicked him in the back. Then he yanked on his tentacles. He yanked on them so hard he actually ripped them clean off his shoulders! Metal Drago tried to claw Super Silver but Super Silver smacked his arm away with the ripped off tentacles and then he proceeded to whip Metal Drago with the tentacles. Being invulnerable himself, Metal Drago wasn't scratched or even dented by the tentacles. Super Silver threw them both at Metal Drago as hard as he could and sent him somersaulting backwards. Metal Drago grabbed the tentacles so he could use them as whips and charged at Super Silver. Metal Drago prepared to slam Super Silver with the tentacles but Super Silver used his psychic powers to throw the sword piece straight into the metal Martian's open chest compartment. Metal Drago let out a horrible gasping wheeze as the sharp piece of sword punctured his vital mechanisms. Blaze and the Martians stared up at the sky

wondering what was happening. Super Silver pulled the sword piece out of Metal Drago's chest with his psychic powers. Metal Drago dropped the tentacles and fell straight down to the ground. He landed back first and made the ground crack. Diablo, Natasha and Marik ran towards the stricken Martian as fast as they could whereas Super Silver just gently hovered down to the ground and powered down. He was now back to his old silver furred self. Blaze ran up to Silver and gave him a quick hug.

"You did it Silver." she said "You defeated Count Drago."

"I think I did more then just defeat him." said Silver softly.

As for the Count, he powered down to his original self but he looked terrible. Diablo, Natasha and Marik kneeled down beside him.

"Drago?" asked Diablo "Are you alright?"

Count Drago couldn't answer, he could only hoarsely gasp. That blow to the chest did more then just bring him down and power him down, it was actually killing him and he was losing the will to live.

"Uncle?!" cried Marik desperately "You're going to live aren't you?"

"I'm afraid…cough! I won't…" wheezed Count Drago "My time…is… up…

I'm…afraid…"

"Count Drago I swear on your soul that I'll make those Mobians pay." said Marik "I'll destroy them all in your name!"

"That…would be…splen…did…" choked Drago "Avenge my… death…brother…

make…those…vermin…pay…"

And with that last final breath, the Count closed his eyes and lay there lifelessly. Silver had done more then just defeat Count Drago, he had actually killed him. Even though Silver hated the Martians just as much as the Seedrians, he hadn't intended for this to happen. Marik let a quick tear escape his eye before turning away

from Count Drago's lifeless body. Natasha put an arm around her son.

"Even though he creeps me out, he was a credit to us all wasn't he?" she said softly.

"Yes he was mother." said Marik.

As for Diablo, he couldn't contain his rage anymore. He exploded into a fit of anger and he stared furiously at Silver and Blaze. His eyes looked like they were burning a fire inside.

"YOU SAVAGES HAVE JUST KILLED MY BROTHER!" he roared "NOW I'M GOING TO DO THE SAME TO YOU!"

Diablo charged straight at Silver and Blaze, fists clenched and teeth bared. Silver was in no position to fight since the fight with Metal Drago and his power down had weakened him. Diablo would smash him into the ground without any difficulty. Then suddenly someone tackled him from the side and sent him falling over. It was Dark Oak, finally up on his feet. His armour looked battered and dented but he was alright.

"If I were you Diablo I'd run away to your little saucer and plot your next scheme." said Dark Oak "Your brother just died, I don't think you want to end up sharing the same fate."

Diablo wanted to smash Dark Oak to pieces but he decided that the death of his brother was plenty enough for now.

"Alright, we will leave." said Diablo angrily "But I will return and smash you Seedrians to pieces and that's a promise!"

"Am I supposed to be intimidated?" sneered Dark Oak.

Diablo growled and looked at Silver and Blaze.

"And you two!" he snarled "Once I destroy the Seedrians, I will destroy your home planet and I'll make sure you pay for what you've done to Count Drago! You have not heard the last of me!"

"Whatever." sighed Silver "I'll look forward to kicking your butt

again."

Diablo growled to himself and turned away. He, Natasha and Marik left the battle zone and headed for home, ready to plot their next move on this world. Dark Oak turned to Silver and Blaze.

"Amazing!" he said to Silver "You've just defeated one of the most powerful Martians ever! With Count Drago gone, we have one Martian less to worry about!"

"Ah it was nothing." said Silver "Just doing my bit to help those in need."

"Is there anything we can do to repay you?" asked Dark Oak.

"No not at all." said Blaze "We just want to get back to our world."

"Do you have a way of getting back like?" asked Dark Oak.

"I've got Blaze's Sol Emeralds." said Silver "I'll use those to warp us home."

"I see." said Dark Oak "Well thank you for all you've done to this planet. Hopefully, we will be able to defeat the Martians once and for all. And if we do, we will make sure you two are honoured for this."

"No need to." said Blaze "Just let everyone now we helped, that's all."

Silver held the red Sol Emerald and held it above his head.

"Sol…CONTROL!" cried Silver.

The Sol Emerald flashed a brilliant red light and a portal opened up out of nowhere. Blaze immediately hoped through it whereas Silver waited a moment. Before he went though he turned to Dark Oak.

"Good luck with your war." he said "And hopefully, Cosmo will be able to return to you."

"Thank you." said Dark Oak "I shall inform Earthia of everything that's happened and that you and your friend have returned home

safely."

Silver nodded and gave Dark Oak a smile before hoping through the portal. The port closed and vanished into thin air.

Silver and Blaze had successfully returned to their Homeworld. The future was still a wreck since the death of Count Drago wasn't an important event that had anything to do with the future's current state.

"Well that was quite the adventure wasn't it?" said Blaze.

"I'll say." said Silver "We ended up helping the Seedrians defeat Count Drago. Although don't you think that might do more harm then good?"

"All we've done Silver, is given the Martians an even bigger reason to invade Mobius then before." said Blaze "Even if we didn't kill Count Drago the Martian invasion will still happen, it's just that Count Drago won't be taking part."

"I wonder if eliminating that one Martian will change the tides of the invasion?" wondered Silver.

"Was Count Drago an important part of the invasion?" asked Blaze.

"I…don't think so." replied Silver "I think Diablo's the key Martian in the invasion because he did the most according to the book. I think even if Count Drago wasn't at the invasion with him he would still conquer and destroy Mobius."

"But what if the Martian invasion isn't the reason for all this?" suggested Blaze "Maybe Sonic and friends stopped it just like they stopped the Devatrons."

"If the Martian invasion isn't the reason we'll just have to do more research." said Silver "I'll find out what the cause of all this is and eliminate it and I won't rest until our future is fixed!"

"Oh Silver you're so focused on your goal aren't you?" said Blaze,

putting the Sol Emeralds neatly back on the shrine.

"Of course I am." said Silver "We can't have a future like this! So I must find out what the cause of it all was!"

"I think you should rest first Silver." said Blaze as she slotted the last emerald into the shrine "That fight with Count Drago must have worn you out."

"It kinda has actually." said Silver, sitting down by the shrine "I suppose I can kick back for a few minutes and then we'll go to the time we need to be at to stop the Martian invasion from happening."

Blaze sat down beside Silver. The two Mobians gazed up at the clouds. Even though they hadn't managed to fix anything so far, they knew that they were getting closer to the truth. Once they found the truth, they would try all they could to undo what it did and fix the future.

As for the present, Sonic and his friends were now up against a new foe. The leader of the Black Arms race known as Black Doom. The Black Arms had invaded Mobius now. Sonic and crew had just dealt with the Devatrons, now they needed to deal with Black Doom and his army, otherwise Mobius would be a wreck and the lives of Sonic and his friends would be over…

Well that's it for Silver & Blaze's arc! What did you think to it? Join me next time on* Tales from Mobius *as the Seedrian and Martian war finally ends...

Now I now what you're thinking. "Jesus Mixedfan8643! How did you write this arc so fast?!" well the truth is...I didn't. I wrote this last year. Way ahead of time and WAY ahead of continuity, just coming back to it to make alternations as I made the new chapters so it fits into the continuity. Impressive isn't it? And why did I write it early? Well...I just couldn't be arsed to wait so I did it. I'm amazed how well I kept it in continuity despite being

so ahead of its time and place.

The Final Frontier 1

Arc 16: The Final Frontier

The Martian Invasion Prologue

Takes place during Stories 120-125 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1

War.

One of the most terrible things that could ever happen to any creature on any world.

War was started in many different ways and many wars were started for different reasons. And one such war had been started for a reason on both sides of the war. And this war was the war between the Seedrians and the Martians. The war had initially started when the Martians invaded, looking for another peaceful planet to destroy and they'd found it in the form of Greengate, the Seedrian Homeworld. The Seedrians were reluctant to even fight this war given their peaceful nature but in order to save themselves, they had to fight or risk extinction. So the Seedrians had to abandon their peaceful nature and fight regardless and in order to save their children, they had sent them to the twin planet of Greengate and they had been safe there all the while the war had been raging on. The war had been going on for an entire year and as of now it was STILL going on but likely, it wouldn't be going on for much longer. For the recent death of Count Drago had been quite a blow to the Martian front. You see, Count Drago was the man with the plans, he came up with many of them and his plotting had been helping the Martians dearly. And now with him gone, the Martians had had to make the plans themselves and hope they work. Without Drago though, the Martians just hadn't been the same. But that didn't stop them putting up a good fight and because of this, the war was prolonging but the Seedrians were beginning to tip the scales into their favour. But how long would they be able to keep this up?

Chances are the Martians could get the battle to lean in their favour but as long as the Seedrians kept up their battle progress, they'd remain on top.

Right now, not much fighting was going off. In fact both sides had backed down for the time being to rest and ready themselves for the next big push. But one Seedrian was still out on the battlefield. And that Seedrian was an armoured warrior known as Red Pine. Red Pine was a powerful warrior who wore crimson red armour with a orange dome in the chest. He had spikes on his back and spikes on his helmet. His helmet had an orange orb for the eyes. Red Pine was renowned for his strength and he was a loyal soldier of Dark Oak, the leader of the Seedrian army and ruler of Greengate alongside his wife Earthia. Red Pine was out in the battlefield because Dark Oak had sent him to foil a Martian mining operation that was going on in the outskirts of the war zone. The Martians were running terribly low on Energy Diamonds after using their batch throughout the ongoing days of this godforsaken war so they were mining stuff to convert into Energy Diamonds. Red Pine had managed to find the mine and as of now, he was kneeling down on top of the cliff and looking down into the mine. There were Martians everywhere and they were using all kinds of equipment to mine any substances they could use to convert into Energy Diamonds. They had drills, they had pickaxes and they had controlled demolition. That is setting up bombs in strategic places to blow holes in the rock to get any material buried in it without causing a ruckus and so they wouldn't endanger any lives in the process. The Martians had found a lot of green gems and were storing them to be taken back to the Martian ship and converted into Energy Diamonds. These gems were known as Plant Gems and they were a popular jewel for many Seedrian Women to wear or keep on display. Red Pine was not pleased to see the Martians mining these beloved gems and he was going to make sure that the Martians' mining operation goes up like a fireworks festival. Red Pine activated his comlink and he spoke to Dark Oak.

"Dark Oak, I have located the Martian mine and am looking down at it right now." he said, his voice was gravely and quite intimidating for a Seedrian.

"Good work Red Pine." rang Dark Oak's robotical voice from the comlink "Now, see to destroying that mine and prevent those disgusting Martians from using our materials to make their wretched diamonds."

"I will get to it my lord." said Red Pine, switching off the comlink after he'd finished speaking.

He peered down into the Martian mine and watched as the Martians worked their socks off mining material to make their Energy Diamonds with (actually, Martians don't wear socks). He put a metal claw to his chin and pondered on how he could destroy the mine and stop their work. He didn't have any firearms weapons with him so he couldn't shoot something and cause some damage. Maybe he could steal one from the Martians? It was a risky idea but he had to try it. There was no other way to destroy this mine. Red Pine started observing the scenery to see which was the best place to strike. Unfortunately, his plans were about to be foiled for a Martian worker had just spotted him atop the cliff and was now aiming a bazooka at him! The Martian fired the bazooka at Red Pine but Red Pine heard the rocket coming towards him so he jumped backwards. The rocket struck the cliff top and brought it crumbling down onto the mine below, alerting all the workers and making them stop dead in their tracks and draw out their weapons. Red Pine fell down the cliff as it crumbled beneath his feet and he tumbled down into the mine and landed in front of all the Martians. The Martians all aimed their weapons at Red Pine and they prepared to blow his head off. Red Pine stared at the Martians but he didn't show any signs of being intimidated. He'd been in situations like this more times than he could count so he didn't really care much for this situation.

"Do not move Seedrian or you can say goodbye to your head!" growled one Martian who was wielding a sniper rifle.

"Actually Martians, you are the ones who will be saying goodbye to YOUR heads!" snarled Red Pine, leaping up onto his feet in the blink of an eye and drawing out a long, thin sword.

He sliced the Martian's rifle in two and he almost lopped off his head but the Martian dodged just before Red Pine could behead him. The Martians all instantly began firing on Red Pine but Red Pine's

armour was tough and it protected him from all the laser shots. Red Pine charged towards two Martians and he killed them both with a single slash of the sword. One Martian worker jumped behind Red Pine and walloped him in the back of the head with his rifle. Red Pine spun around and plunged his sword straight into the Martian's gut. One of the workers decided to grab a pickaxe and he swung it at Red Pine. The axe hit Red Pine's shoulder pad and left a huge dent in it. The Martian then swung the axe into Red Pine's gut and left a dent in his armour. Red Pine double over and gasped in pain. The Martian tried to hit him again with the pickaxe but Red Pine sliced the head off the axe with his sword. The Martian yelped in horror and he ran for his life. Three Martian soldiers fired on Red Pine with their rifles but none of their shots took effect on Red Pine's strong armour. Red Pine lunged forward and swiftly killed two of the firing Martians with a single slash of his sword. The third Martian aimed at the orb in his helmet and shot it. The blast shattered the orb and left Red Pine's face vulnerable for attack. Red Pine slashed the rifle in two and tried to kill the Martian but the Martian jumped out of the way, grabbed Red Pine's arm and swung him over onto his back. Another Martian carrying a rifle aimed at Red Pine's exposed face but Red Pine jumped out of the way before the Martian could fire. Red Pine ran towards the Martian and then elbowed him in the gut. The Martian doubled over and Red Pine kicked the rifle out of his hands. He then grabbed the Martian worker and swiftly snapped his neck with a mighty tug on his head. Another Martian tried to shot Red Pine with his rifle but Red Pine threw his sword at the Martian and it plunged into his gut. The Martian keeled over dead but his rifle hit the ground rather sharply, causing it to fire and as bad luck would have it, it shot one of the bombs for the controlled demolition! The bomb instantly went off and a terrific explosion blew everybody off their feet and set off all the other bombs that were lying nearby for they had not been set up yet. The explosions from the bombs destroyed the mine in an instant. Red Pine was slammed against a rocky wall and he came close to passing out. His armour was dented and damaged heavily by the bomb's explosion and he could barely stand back up. Only two Martian workers were alive after the explosion. All the others had already been killed by Red Pine and the rest killed by the explosion. All the equipment had been destroyed and any process in the mine was completely obliterated. This mine was long gone thanks to Red Pine so the Martians would

be coming back to the ship empty handed. Still, they got a great consolation prize, Red Pine himself. He'd be a great prisoner for the Martians. The two worked seized the barely conscious Red Pine and they dragged him up out of the mine and back towards the Martian ship where he would be terminated by their masters…

On the Martian ship, a Martian was monitoring the mining process via a visual contact screen that allowed him to see what was going on. The Martian was the ship's pilot as well as a combatant and he was rather tall and rather thin in appearance with long thing claws on each hand. He wore a golden helmet with curved, spike structures above the eye, making it look like he had large, metal eyebrows on his helmet. The helmet had a crest too. His armour was red with bits of silver in places and he wore heavy metal boots with spikes on the knees (just imagine getting kneed in the gut by him! Ouch!). One his right arm, he wore a metal gauntlet with chunks of Energy Diamond in them but he didn't have a gauntlet for his left arm. On both upper arms though, he wore an armour piece. He had a metal belt around his waist and on his back he had large spikes pointing upwards. His voice was exactly the same as Starscream's voice from *Transformers Prime* (very scary for a Martian isn't it?). He was not pleased at all with what he had just seen. Red Pine had stuck his nose in where it didn't belong and now he'd destroyed the mine by accidentally causing a rifle to shoot a bomb! Diablo was NOT going to be pleased with this.

"Grrr…how dare that impudent fool Red Pine screw up this imperative mining operation?!" bellowed the Martian angrily "Ooooh what I wouldn't give to rip his throat open right now!"

Then suddenly, the door opened and in walked another Martian. This Martian was a messenger and the brother of Grand War Mistress Natasha, the mother of the notorious Marik the Martian. He was truly a terrifying looking monster. He was tall and somewhat thin with long, thin, sharp claws like the first Martian and he wore golden rings with Energy Diamond chunks in them. wore gold and silver armour and on his head was perched a unique looking helmet with a large spike on the forehead (a head butt from him is bound to hurt!). He had shoulder pads, arm gauntlets with blades sticking out of

them and he had four spikes on his back, two pointing up and two pointing down. He wore heavy metal boots and he also wore a mouth plate. This was because he had been born without vocal chords (they hadn't developed when he was in his mother's womb) and thus, could not speak and the mouth plate was a sign to other Martians that he was mute. The first Martian heard the other Martian come in and he turned around to face him.

"Zarondight, what is it?" asked the first Martian.

Zarondight obviously didn't say anything since he couldn't speak. Instead he just stood to the side and showed the first Martian the two survivors from the mine striding in and carrying Red Pine with them. The workers threw Red Pine at the feet of the Martian and he grinned quite happily at the sight of a damaged Red Pine lying helpless at his feet. Red Pine forced himself up onto his knees and he glared up at the Martian.

"Sycranna…it's been a while…" said Red Pine weakly, coughing up some blood "So…what have…you been…up to?"

"You mind your own business you Seedrian filth!" snarled Sycranna "But I will tell you what I'm going to be up to right now!"

He then suddenly lashed out and plunged his claws straight through the orb in Red Pine's chest! His claws shattered the orb and plunged straight into Red Pine's chest, puncturing it and making Red Pine scream in pain.

"How does that feel Red Pine?" sneered Sycranna "Hopefully this will teach you to blow up Martian mines! Unfortunately, you won't live to learn that lesson…"

He embedded his claws even deeper into his chest to make double-sure that the attack was going to kill Red Pine. Red Pine could only gasp hoarsely as he felt his chest being punctured. Sycranna resisted the urge to push his claws in even further and tear Red Pine's heart out. Instead, he just slowly pulled his claws out of Red Pine's chest to make sure that it really hurts. He pulled his claws out and Red Pine collapsed on the floor, dead as a dumpling. His blood seeped out all over the floor and Sycranna's claws were drenched

with blood. He licked his claws clean and sneered at Red Pine's dead body. How beautiful it was to see one of the top Seedrian Warriors lying on the floor dead at long last. He then glowered at the two worker Martians who brought Red Pine to him.

"Well don't stand there and look gormless, take that wretched body away!" snarled Sycranna "Do you really expect me to do it myself?"

The two workers grabbed Red Pine's dead body by the arms and they dragged it carelessly away. The body was going to be incinerated. Martians did that with their victims, just incinerate the body and keep whatever they want off the body and in Red Pine's case, they were going to keep his trademark armour. Sycranna smiled a slimy smile to himself and he put his hands behind his back.

"Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! What good fortune we've had today Zarondight!" cheered Sycranna "We may have lost an important mine but we managed to kill the notorious Red Pine! Diablo will be so pleased with me that he might promote me to a higher rank in this army. A rank that I so deserve like…head combatant or squadron leader…"

He smiled to himself at the very thought of getting a higher rank. You see, Sycranna's got one of the lowest ranks in the army. Pilots aren't very high ranking and the most amount of power Sycranna has is merely control over the cockpit. On the battlefield, he's just another soldier in battle but one of the more powerful ones. Sycranna was just thankful he had a rank at all but he still so wished for a better one then just "Pilot/Combatant". The death of Red Pine might be a little bit of a stretch but it was bound to catch some attention from Diablo. After all, pilots rarely ever get to kill anybody, especially someone as important as Red Pine.

"Zarondight, your message recorder please." ordered Sycranna "I'd love for you to deliver this message for Diablo since you're the messenger boy."

Zarondight nodded and he handed Sycranna a little recording device that he used to record voices with. Zarondight used this to deliver messages and spy on people. He is a spy as well as a messenger

and Sycranna highly respected Zarondight for that. Sycranna switched the device on and he spoke into it.

"Diablo, this message is coming from Grand Pilot Sycranna." spoke Sycranna "I am happy to inform you that Red Pine is dead. I roamed around looking for Seedrians and I came across him at a mine. He unfortunately destroyed the mine but I killed him afterwards. If you do not believe me than go to the incinerator room and you shall see the body in there. Provided…it hasn't already BEEN incinerated yet…"

He then switched off the device and handed it back to Zarondight. Zarondight didn't seem incredibly happy with Sycranna's little lie on how he'd gone out and killed Red Pine himself when actually, he'd been brought to Sycranna to **be** killed. Sycranna just folded his arms and scowled at his silent minion.

"What?!" he snapped "How am I supposed to impress Diablo if I tell him that two workers brought me the injured Red Pine so I could finish him off?! I do strive to have a better rank in this miserable army and I cannot get that if I don't exaggerate myself a little to make myself look grand! Besides, I would have finished him off even if he *wasn't* injured."

Zarondight just made a sneering expression with his eyes as if to say "Oh really?" Sycranna read the expression easily and he growled at Zarondight.

"Oh just deliver the bloody message to Diablo and stop mocking me!" snarled Sycranna "And make sure that Red Pine's body hasn't been incinerated yet so that Diablo may see it as proof of my achievements."

Zarondight nodded and he left the room, leaving Sycranna alone to do what he liked. Sycranna turned back to his screen and he crooned to himself.

"I can just imagine how those vermin feel about their precious Red Pine joining the deceased…"

Meanwhile, over at the Seedrian palace, Dark Oak/Lucas was out of his armour and enjoying some peace and quiet with his wife Earthia. The two were sitting alone in the throne room (which had been repaired from the time Silver and Blaze visited them) and having a nice, quiet moment to themselves before the fighting resumes. This brought Lucas back to the good old days where he and Earthia would be sitting by peacefully and adoring all the smiling faces of their subjects and ruling a happy, beautiful plant world. Just a pity the Martians had to start this war with the Seedrians and ruin all of that. Ooooh how Lucas and Earthia hated those war-loving scum! But the Seedrians were winning at the moment and hopefully, the war wouldn't be going on any longer and things could return to normal and they could get their children back. At least Cosmo was as far away from the war as possible so they didn't have to worry about her.

"Oh Lucas, do you miss the days before the war?" asked Earthia all of the sudden.

"Earthia my love, I would KILL to have things back the way they were before those scoundrels invaded and decided to take away our peace and tranquillity and force us into war." said Lucas, taking Earthia's hand in his hands softly "That's how much I miss those days. True the war's given us something more thrilling and exciting than before but…I'd gladly give up the thrill of the battle for our peaceful world."

"I know how you feel Lucas." said Earthia with tears brimming in her eyes "This whole war's really affected us all. We've been forced to become soldiers, we've had to abandon our peaceful ways just for the sake of our survival, we've had to evacuate all our children just to make sure that we survive and that they're safe and we're losing valuable people and beloved friends day after day. Oh Lucas…I… sniff…I wish this war would end already!"

She then got up from her throne and threw herself into her husband's arms. Lucas just hugged Earthia and let the distraught Seedrian cry over his shoulder. Earthia had been the most deeply affected by the war and likely was going to be scarred for a VERY long time after the war. Earthia may never be the same woman again once this war blows over and Lucas felt sad just thinking

about it. But there was hope the war would be over and the Seedrian race can continue their lives as they did before the war. That bit of hope made Lucas feel so much better. Then suddenly, their peace was disturbed by a soldier bursting into the room frantically. Earthia leaped up out of Lucas' arms and stared at the soldier.

"Oh hello, what may I ask is the reason for your presence then?" asked Earthia politely, wiping her eyes dry.

"I've got terrible news your highness!" shrieked the soldier "Red Pine's life signal…has just gone offline!"

Lucas and Earthia were horrified to hear this. Before you get confused, EVERY Seedrian soldier is micro chipped with a special chip that sends life signals to a special computer and will let you know if the soldiers are alive or dead. It was a clever way of finding out whom the well-being of the soldiers should any soldier go out on their own for a secret mission or something. Red Pine was dead so his life signal went offline, telling the soldier that he was dead. Earthia was so shocked by the news that she broke down again and Lucas just got up to his feet, growling loudly.

"Do you mean to tell me Red Pine's…DEAD?!" thundered Lucas.

"Um…if his life signal's offline then yes!" squeaked the soldier.

"How dare those savages kill my loyal soldier?!" snarled Lucas "Red Pine's one of my best men! How dare they kill him! That's it, we're going out to continue the battle! I'll go get armoured up, you rally the troops and get whatever weapons are available ready!"

"Yes sir!" said the soldier, running off to obey his order.

"Lucas, please for my sake, be careful out there." sobbed Earthia "We've just lost Red Pine…I don't want to lose you too."

"Earthia my precious, I'll be fine." promised Lucas, stroking Earthia's face affectionately "I'll be taking Pale Bay Leaf, Black Narcissus and Yellow Zelkova with me. Those Martians cannot possibly beat all of us."

"I know but…I just want you to be extra careful out there." said Earthia "Now Red Pine's gone…"

"Trust me dear, I'll be fine." said Lucas, kissing Earthia on the head "We'll all kill as many Martians as possible, make them pay for Red Pine's death and bring the Seedrians ever closer to victory."

Earthia nodded and she and Lucas had a deep, loving embrace with each other before Lucas left the throne room to get his armour on. As Lucas left to get armoured up, Earthia sat back down on her throne, her heart aching with the pain of Red Pine's loss and the worry of losing anyone else. Losing Red Pine just made her even more determined to have this godforsaken war just end already…

Meanwhile on the Martian warship, Diablo, Natasha and Marik had gathered all the top ranking troops together into the meeting room and they were all having a hearty discussion. These Martians all varied in size, weapons and rank and were all dangerous Martians never to be messed with.

One of the Martians in the room was a Squadron Leader and Strategic Expert named Dranzer. Dranzer was a formidable looking opponent. He was broad in appearance and looked very tough. He wore a unique looking helmet with three spikes at the top of it, one straight and two curved. Above the eyes rested two long, curved structures. He wore shoulder pads with a spike pointing up and a spike pointing down on each of them, large arm gauntlets with elbow spikes and clawed gloves. He wore boy armour with an Energy Diamond chunk in the chest area and around the waist section was a logo that was supposed to symbolize a heart being punctured. He wore heavy metal boots with knee spikes and curved blade like structures on the sides. On his back were two large blades that made him vaguely look like he had wings. His armour was a mixture of blue and yellow. His voice was low and sinister and he was also Diablo's cousin.

Dranzer had a twin brother named Obelisk who was the same rank as him and his armour was the same except it was green and orange, the blades on his back pointed up and the logo on the waist

section was flipped around. Obelisk had a scar near his eye that had been caused be previous battles. He had a booming, powerful voice that few Martians could match volume wise.

Another Martian in the room was a beautiful female Martian named Mercury. She wore a golden helmet with three spikes lying flat against the forehead (a bit like Silver's quill style) and on her back she wore a harness with katana blades protruding behind the shoulders. She wore a golden breastplate (don't smile you dirty boys!) and silver armour that came up to the breastplate. She wore golden arm gauntlets, a silver and golden skirt, silver knee pads and golden boots. She was the Champion Archer of Mars and she was also Count Drago's girlfriend (so as you can imagine, she's pretty mad that he's dead right now). Nobody could fire an arrow better than Mercury.

There was another female Martian in the room too and she was married to Dranzer. Her name was Myra and she wore a fancy looking headwear with an Energy Diamond orb in the middle, arm gauntlets with elbow spikes and a golden star on them spikes on the wrists. She wore a navy blue vest with matching shorts and she wore a red belt that was designed like a bunch of circles joined together around the waist. She wore brown thigh-high boots with a red arrow on them and the boots had knee spikes. She was rather slender and quite beautiful looking.

Also in the room was Count Drago's replacement, a Martian named Nyder but now known as Count Nyder. He wore a bizarre looking helmet with spikes galore and a metal peace that drooped down between his eyes so he could still see while wearing it. He wore a chest plate with shoulder pads, metal attachments on his hands that made him look like he had cybernetic hands instead of normal hands, a belt with a spike buckle and thigh-high boots with spikes on the top of the foot section. He also had a split cape drooping from each shoulder. He wasn't as clever as Count Dragon but he was the best candidate they had to replace the deceased Count.

And finally, there were two young Martians in the room. They were Marik's brother and sister (yes, he has siblings, you surprised?) and their names were Silas and Sierra. Silas was a year older than Marik and he wore a long coat with a very odd looking helmet on his head.

He also wore a chest plate with structures that curve over his shoulders and pointed behind him. He wore chunky golden shoes with spikes around the ankle. Sierra wore a spiked helmet, long gloves that came to the elbow, a mini skirt that was black and red and thigh high boots. She had an arm mounted crossbow perched on her arm. Silas was next in line to the Grand Warlord position with Marik being first since Diablo favoured Marik and Sierra was a trainee archery student with Mercury as her mentor. Sierra was VERY loyal to Marik (so loyal you'd think she was his girlfriend or something) whereas Silas was very jealous of Marik since Diablo favoured him over him (where have we heard that before?) and longed to prove himself better than Marik.

Right now, they were sitting around a large, round table and discussing their recent efforts in this ongoing war.

"Everybody, I'd just like to thank you all for joining us for this imperative meeting right now." boomed Diablo in his deep, booming voice "Right then, who wants to start off the discussion thread?"

Dranzer raised his hand.

"Go for it cousin." said Diablo "What would you like to discuss first?"

"I just thought I'd bring up my squadron's recent outing in this war." said Dranzer with a grim look on his face. Dranzer often found it hard to smile and when he did, he always looked like he was forcing himself to smile "Before we fell back to rest and recuperate, my squadron was attacked by Yellow Zelkova. I managed to fend the idiot off but my numbers were dwindling by the time I'd defeated him."

"My squadron rushed into to help but then Pale Bay Leaf and Red Pine finished my men off." put in Obelisk "Those two are demons when paired together. Me and my twin couldn't fend them off."

"That is unfortunate to hear cousins." muttered Diablo.

"Pale Bay Leaf maybe a coward who always has to team up with someone else to help win his battles but when he has a partner, we can't deny how much of a nuisance he can be." said Natasha grimly

"Especially when Dark Oak's on the field. So has anybody else got anything to report?"

"Not much your grace." muttered Mercury, still sulking over Drago's death "Other than my archery team got annihilated…again."

"I haven't got much to say either." sighed Myra in a bored manner "My magnetism hammer is still providing us a big edge we need to keep the war going as usual. But not enough."

"I'm sure you try your best dear." purred Dranzer supportively, putting his hand on Myra's.

"I do indeed hunky boy but even the best efforts can dwindle in a losing fight." said Myra, closing her fingers around Dranzer's hand.

"The Seedrians have been gaining an edge on us since the death of Uncle Drago." grumbled Marik "And it's thanks to that impudent silver fool from the future coming in and ruining everything! It's his fault we're losing!"

"Is it Marik, or was it you abandoning us to chase after a stupid Seedrian kid that's causing us to start losing?" sniffed Silas rudely "I mean you're supposed to be the next Grand Warlord and thus, one of the best Martians out there. We all know how impossible it is to win without the great Marik the Martian beside us."

"You shut up Silas!" snarled Marik "My absence has not had ANY impact on this war at all! The war would have been the same as it was before Drago's death even if I hadn't left! Besides, chasing Cosmo down was for good intentions! I was hoping to find where the children were being evacuated so I could slaughter them all but I accidentally knocked Cosmo off course so I followed her and then we ended up on another world! So you can't say anything about what I've been up to during my time away!"

"Pfft, yeah right." sneered Silas "What good did you do in your absence? You lost your hand to a bunch of furry creatures! Utterly pathetic! Proves you're not as good as dad thinks you are."

Marik fumed at his obnoxious brother.

"Shut up Silas! Marik's a far greater warrior then you'll ever be so leave him alone!" yelled Sierra defensively "Besides, I don't see YOU doing anything useful either!"

"At least I didn't abandon my family and friends just to follow a fleeing Seedrian!" snapped Silas.

"He was trying to find where the children were being evacuated!" retorted Sierra "I'd love to see YOU try something like that!"

" **ENOUGH CHILDREN!** " thundered Diablo, his voice making the room shudder due to how powerful it was.

Silas and Sierra stopped arguing and Marik glared at his siblings. Not much had changed in his absence unfortunately. If only his siblings could stop arguing or picking fights with him or each other. Diablo frowned at the two children and then he focused back onto the others.

"So…let's discuss other seminal matters." said Diablo "Like our next invasion once the Seedrian war is over."

"I believe you've told us that we're going to invade a planet called "Mobius" once we've finished with the Seedrians." said Dranzer "Even though you've yet to tell us what it is and why we should bother…"

"Marik, I'll let you tell everybody." said Diablo "You know the planet better than we do."

Marik nodded and he stepped forward to the table where everybody was sitting. Silas of course, made a mocking expression behind Marik's back. Everybody turned their attention to Marik and Marik began his testimony.

"When chasing down the Seedrian children, I accidentally knocked one of them off course and I followed it to a distant planet. A planet known as Mobius." announced Marik "The planet is populated by furry creatures called Mobians and some of them have supernatural powers while others do not. Their best warrior is this Mobian…"

He showed the Martians a picture of Sonic the Hedgehog that he

still had with him. Everybody looked at it and they didn't look impressed by it at all.

"This is Mobius' best warrior?" snorted Dranzer.

"He doesn't look like much." agreed Obelisk.

"Don't be so quick to jump to conclusions you lot." warned Marik "I found out the hard way when the Mobians claimed my hand…"

He then showed everybody his metal hand and the Martians all gasped at it.

"The Mobians did THAT to you?!" shrieked Mercury.

"Yes." muttered Marik "Sonic the Hedgehog, the Mobian in the picture I showed you, stole my only Energy Diamond and used it on me* and sent me plummeting off a cliff. The resulting impact crippled my hand for life so I had to install cybernetics into it in order to get it working again."

"Coughcough"pathetic"coughcough!" spluttered Silas mockingly.

Unfortunately, Marik heard him and he promptly zapped him in the gut with a quick jolt of electricity. Silas yelped and he doubled over in pain. Marik turned back to the others.

"As I was saying…" continued Marik "Sonic may not look like much of a problem but trust me when I say he is. He can run at the speed of sound, hence the reason why he's called "Sonic" and he has many powerful attacks. His battle prowess is amazing and he's beaten me on several occasions. I've come close to defeating him though but he has many friends on his side who have provided a great help to him. Some of his friends have powers and some do not but nonetheless, have sufficient battle prowess. Do not take the Mobians likely. Even I alone am no match for them and that was my biggest weakness against them. I underestimated them and paid the price for it several times before…"

He tapped the table with his claws.

"…and also…they're the ones who killed Count Drago." added

Marik, a tear coming to his eye "The murderers are a pair of future Mobians named Silver and Blaze. They left their time zone for reasons I don't know about and they ended up contributing to the war. They left many of our men battered and beaten and Silver killed Count Drago."

The other Martians all gasped in surprise at this, especially Mercury since she hadn't really known whom Drago's killer was until now. You see, all the Martians in the room sans Marik, Diablo and Natasha of course, had been preoccupied with other matters and communication between them had been limited so they hadn't had much time to be updated and briefed on the recent events. They'd only been told vague details at best and now they finally knew the whole story. Mercury was horrified to hear who killed Count Drago but she was kind of glad she knew who the killer was now. She now knows who she's targeting and whom she has to kill for killing her boyfriend.

"So those Mobian things killed my Drago?!" shrieked Mercury "Well now we HAVE to invade Mobius and destroy it now! How dare they kill my boyfriend and think they can get away with it!"

"I share your heartbreak Mercury." said Marik sympathetically, a rare expression he used when he wasn't talking to his own kind "Uncle Drago was a credit to them all and now he's pushing up rocks. So that's why I want us to invade Mobius. It's a peace-loving world that has done harm to me and killed Drago. That and a Seedrian is taking refuge there."

"Well I'm up for this invasion." boomed Obelisk gleefully "Especially as it'll give me fresh meat to soften my knuckles on!"

"I love a good challenge." said Dranzer "And those Mobians sound like they provide me with one. Not to mention anyone who harms my cousin's son and kills my cousin's brother deserves a beating from me."

"I'm in if my husband's in." said Myra casually.

"So when do we invade daddy?" asked Sierra "I wanna make those Mobians pay for what they did to my brother!"

"We invade once the Seedrian war is over as I said before." said Diablo "If we lose or win, the outcome will be the same, we move onto Mobius next."

"Um my lord, may I be allowed to speak at this moment in time?" asked Count Nyder politely.

"You may." said Diablo, eager to hear what the new Count had to say.

"I have a cunning little stratagem that'll unsure us a magnanimous victory over those gamin." explained Nyder, pulling something out of his cloak.

He put it down onto the table. The thing he'd pulled out of his cloak was a spherical device with a timer on it. There was a hook on the top so it could be attached to a chain or a rope and the thing was the size of a basketball. Natasha glared at it suspiciously.

"Is that a bomb?" asked Natasha "If so then…really? That's your brilliant plan? Just…a bomb? In case you haven't noticed, we've used bombs more times than we've had hot dinners in this sodding war and we're still nowhere closer to victory!"

"If you'd clam your jumpy nerves for one minute my child, I shall exposit on this bomb's intended purpose." said Nyder hastily "As you can see, we're fighting a losing battle at the moment so I thought that if we dug down to the planet's core and placed this bomb, which has a blast radius of thirty miles, in it…we could actively destroy the world and win the war."

"Out of the question!" thundered Diablo "Martians NEVER resort to cowardly tactics like that!"

"B-b-but sir…" stammered Nyder.

"We Martians pride ourselves in being able to fight a battle and ethier have a glorious victory or a hard defeat!" roared Diablo "We may not like losing but we accept our defeats should we have any! Blowing up a planet is a cowardly tactic and would ruin our reputation is fearsome, valorous warriors!"

"But don't you want to win this war sir?" asked Nyder feebly.

"I do…with tactics that DON'T make us look like cowards!" retorted Diablo "Nobody will take us seriously anymore if we resort to cowardly tactics! Besides, the plan will fail anyway as it is impossible to dig to a planet's core and keep it subtle! You're bound to get spotted and the plan will be a flux! Your notion is denied and you are not to dig anywhere near the planet's core! Comprehended?!"

Count Nyder fumed at Diablo. How dare the big oaf reject such a brilliant plan of his? Does he not want to win this war after all?! It certainly seemed like it! Blowing up the world was the best option they had at winning the war so why would Diablo reject such an offer?! But Diablo was in charge and he had to do what he said or face having his bones broken. Nyder picked the bomb up and put it back under his cloak.

"Yes…sir." he said, spitting out the last word viciously.

He then stormed out the room with the bomb under his cloak. Diablo just ignored him and focused back on the others. Natasha however seemed a little annoyed at the fact Diablo had just rejected such a brilliant idea.

"Diablo hon, please reconsider…" began Natasha.

"Not a word out of you!" snarled Diablo "The plan to blow up the planet is denied! Does everyone understand that!"

"Indeed Warlord Diablo." said the Martians.

"Excellent! Now then…" began Diablo

"Oy Diablo, you've got a message from Sycranna, sent to me by Natasha's darling brother." came a cold, feminine voice from behind.

Another Martian walked into the room. This Martian was a female Martian and she wore a fancy looking headwear with a long flowing spit cape draping from it. She wore a crop top, arm bands around her upper arms, golden gauntlets around her lower arms, a tunic with a fancy pattern around her waist and thigh high boots with arrows on them. The look in her face was consistently bitter,

suggesting she was a pretty miserable Martian. Her rank was that she was the messenger woman and she was bitterly jealous of Natasha. You see, she loves Diablo too but Diablo completely ignored her in favour of the far more beautiful Natasha and now this Martian had to spend her life watching Diablo and Natasha as a happy couple while she has no one. Diablo just scowled at the Martian.

"Rozarr, must you always have a message for me when I'm in the middle of a meeting?!" snarled Diablo.

"Well it's not my fault someone has a message for you." snapped Rozarr.

She handed Diablo the device that Zarondight used to record messages and other things and Diablo played it. The device played Sycranna's recorded message.

"Diablo, this message is coming from Grand Pilot Sycranna. I am happy to inform you that Red Pine is dead. I roamed around looking for Seedrians and I came across him at a mine. He unfortunately destroyed the mine but I killed him afterwards. If you do not believe me than go to the incinerator room and you shall see the body in there. Provided…it hasn't already BEEN incinerated yet…"

Diablo stopped playing the message after it had ended and he passed the device back over to Rozarr. Rozarr handed it back over to Zarondight who was standing outside the room and listening in on the whole meeting. Diablo was pretty surprised to hear this. His Grand Pilot Sycranna…had just managed to kill Red Pine?! Now that was an achievement worth noting! And there was no way Sycranna would be lying to him since Sycranna was loyal to him so Diablo believed him, even the exaggerated bits of the message.

"Well…that was surprising." said Diablo "Sycranna's killed Red Pine!"

"Yes!" cheered Marik "Ooooh those Seedrians will be in trouble with Red Pine gone for good! Oh Sycranna's done us some good hasn't he?"

"Red Pine was a big nuisance to us so it's good to hear of his demise." purred Dranzer.

"I bet those stupid Seedrians are going to be furious when they hear this!" giggled Sierra sadistically "Ooooh what I wouldn't give to see their horrified faces!"

"They can be furious all they like, I'll just put an arrow through their hearts." snorted Mercury.

"Nevertheless, Red Pine was one of the best Seedrian soldiers out there and his death is very fortunate for us." said Natasha "Sycranna may have single-handedly provided us with a much needed edge in this war. With Red Pine down, the Seedrian's strength will begin to crumble."

"Indeed my love." said Diablo, earning a jealous glare from Rozarr behind his back "So we shall celebrate Red Pine's demise. Let us have a feast on Roast Zundapp to celebrate Red Pine's death. And who knows, maybe we'll get to kill more of the best Seedrians…"

Then suddenly, a loud explosion from outside stuck the ship and made the room shudder. Everybody leaped up onto their feet in an instant and they looked around wildly.

"What was that?!" exclaimed Dranzer.

"Are we under attack?!" shrieked Myra, picking up her trademark weapon which was a large red and silver hammer that had two magnet shaped structures on the sides.

"I bet it's those pesky Seedrians wanting revenge over the death of Red Pine!" growled Obelisk "Come on, let's go outside and blow them all away!"

"Everybody in this room will come outside and deal with the Seedrians!" ordered Diablo "Nyder will come too! Come on, let's go everybody!"

With that said, everybody ran out of the meeting room to deal with the Seedrians. As they ran off, Rozarr sneaked off and headed towards the weapon's room whereas Zarondight, oblivious to

Rozarr's actions, strode back off to Sycranna's room. He wasn't entirely looking forward to reporting what he'd recorded to Sycranna since he'd just start moaning that Diablo hasn't given him a promotion yet but at least he could tell him that Diablo appreciated his killing of Red Pine…

Outside, Diablo, Natasha, Marik, Silas, Sierra, Dranzer, Obelisk, Mercury, Myra and Nyder had all armed themselves and were ready to face the Seedrian threat. Diablo wielded his mace, Marik had his metal claws and Natasha had her nunchakus. Mercury was armed with her trademark bow and set of arrows, Dranzer and Obelisk were both armed with underarm handheld cannons. Dranzer's cannon had a static barrel and fired lasers whereas Obelisk's was a rotary cannon that fired laser bullets. Nyder had a rifle in his hands, Silas had a sword, Sierra had her arm mounted crossbow and Myra had her magnetism hammer (you'll see why it's called that later). They were up against Dark Oak as usual and beside him were three other Seedrian warriors. These three were Black Narcissus, Pale Bay Leaf and Yellow Zelkova. Black Narcissus wore black armour and had a rather narrow helmet that was insectoid in appearance with a large purple visor. He also had a blue flowing cape clinging to his shoulders. His weapon was a staff with a large mirror at the end (he likes looking at himself hence the name "Narcissus"). Pale Bay Leaf wore green armour with pointed shoulders, curved horns on ethier side of his helmet and his field of view was simply two eyes in the helmet. He wore a split cape on each shoulder and wielded a pair of blades for weapons. Yellow Zelkova wore (what else?) yellow armour that was bulky and matched his broad and muscular appearance. His helmet had chunky horns on ethier side, a dark green visor for him to see out of, a mouthpiece that looked vaguely knight-like and a green cape. Zelkova did not wield weapons, instead preferring to bash everything to pieces with his fists for he was the strongest Seedrian in the army. There were many soldiers behind them and they had wheeled cannons aiming at the Martian ship. Dark Oak drew his sword out and he pointed it at the Martian.

"You freaks have just murdered Red Pine and we're here to make you pay for it!" snarled Dark Oak.

"We know why you're here Dark Oak, you don't need to tell us!" snapped Diablo.

"Leave our territory and we won't have to kill you lot too!" warned Natasha, twirling her nunchakus around.

"We will leave once your ship is a smoking ruin and you're all dead!" growled Dark Oak "Soldiers, attack and don't leave a single Martian alive!"

The Seedrians were all too happy to attack. They all charged towards the Martians and the Martians charged into battle too. They all swung swords, fired lasers and threw fists at one another, getting into an incredible battle. This battle was going to be a serious one and chances are, it'd be going on for quite a while.

Up in the ship's cockpit, Sycranna was staring out the window and watching the battle go on. It was rare when he got to join in such battles and that's why he wants a better rank, so he can do battle more often.

"Look at those Martians having a great battle out there." muttered Sycranna "And I'm mostly kept up in here keeping an eye on this ship. What I wouldn't give to have more time out in the battlefield then being up here most of the time!"

His ranting was interrupted by the untimely arrival of Zarondight. Sycranna quickly spun around and put his hands behind his back.

"Aaah, Zarondight. What did Diablo think to the news of Red Pine's demise?" asked Sycranna eagerly.

Zarondight fast-forwarded his recordings to Diablo's reaction and he played it for Sycranna as well as the other Martian's reactions to the news. Sycranna was pleased to hear such feedback but he was also disappointed to hear that Diablo didn't seem to hint at a possible promotion. What did he have to do to get noticed around here?! Sycranna just kept it cool and kept smiling a slimy smile at Zarondight.

"Well I'm glad to hear that Diablo appreciated my killing of Red

Pine." crowed Sycranna "That should have earned me a better rank but oh well, a dead Seedrian like Red Pine is better than nothing. I'd very much like to go up to Diablo and thank him for his thoughts on my killing. But they're in a big battle right now so I'll just have to wait until he's finished before…"

He suddenly realized that Zarondight wasn't listening to him. Instead, the silent Martian was looking out the window and clearly watching something. Sycranna fumed at him.

"Zarondight! I am talking to you! Will you pay attention?!" snarled Sycranna.

Zarondight ignored him. Instead, he just pointed out the window and up at what he was looking at. Sycranna looked in Zarondight's direction and he spotted what Zarondight had noticed. A ship was flying through the sky and it was a Seedrian ship. But not just any Seedrian ship, it was one of the Seedrian ships that the children had been evacuated in. It was shaped like a flower and coloured teal and it was flying through the sky and looking for a place to land. It was just over the Martian ship. Sycranna looked delighted for he recognized that ship.

"A Seedrian evacuation ship?!" he cried delightedly "Ooooh now this is serendipitous indeed! I bet one of the Seedrian children has come back here because that child is missing its mommy. Well, I shall take it upon myself to make sure they do not get reunited…"

He then proceeded to walk out of the cockpit.

"Zarondight, take over my post until I return." ordered Sycranna "I'm going Seedrian hunting…"

Zarondight nodded and he stood to position while Sycranna left the room to catch the ship and capture who was inside. With any luck, it might be a Seedrian child and he could maybe use the child to find out where the Seedrian children have been evacuated so the Martians could kill them all…

Well the first part of The Final Frontier has begun! What's gonna happen next? Tune in next time for Part 2 as things REALLY get intense!

So what do you think to some of these Martians we've been introduced to so far?

The Final Frontier 2

Arc 16: The Final Frontier

The Martian Invasion Prologue

Takes place during Stories 120-125 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2

The moment of stalemate between the Martian and Seedrian races had been broken and now the two factions were battling each other once again. For once though, it was the Seedrians that had started it. They weren't too pleased with the death of their great comrade Red Pine so Dark Oak and three of his best men Yellow Zelkova, Black Narcissus and Pale Bay Leaf along with some soldiers and wheeled cannons had come over to destroy the Martians. They were taking no prisoners this time around, they were desperate to win the war and they were going to give it their all right now. And so were the Martians. The best Martians were all out on the battlefield right now. Grand Warlord Diablo and his wife Grand War Mistress Natasha along with their three children, Marik, Silas and Sierra, Dranzer & Obelisk the twin Martians, Myra the wife of Dranzer, Count Nyder the replacement for Count Drago and Mercury the Champion Archer were all out on the battlefield and fending off the Seedrians. This was going to be one of the Martian's easier battles given how the Seedrians barely had anything with them right now, just a small strike force and a couple of heavy weapons that could be dealt with easily. Really, the four leaders were the only ones they had to worry about and even then, they outnumbered them and Red Pine wasn't here to help so this was going to be easier than before. And for the moment, it was. The Martians were winning this one so far. The Seedrian Soldiers were falling to them very quickly but the leaders were putting up a great fight and Mercury had taken out the cannons with a simple little laser arrow from her hi-tech bow (her bow generates laser arrows for her to fire, meaning she has much better arrows then a normal archer AND a limitless supply of arrows.

Cool eh?) The laser arrows were very powerful and they explode when they hit an inorganic substance such as the cannons so you can imagine the damage Mercury had caused to the cannons. Dark Oak was not pleased with Mercury destroying his cannons so he tried to slice her in two with his golden sword but a swift uppercut to the chin from Diablo took care of that. Dark Oak hurled into the air and he crashed into the remains of one of the two cannons.

"Thanks Diablo." said Mercury.

"Anytime Mercury." said Diablo "I hope your bow's still up for the task for the leaders are still proving difficult and some of the soldiers are still up and firing."

"Oh it is Diablo, it certainly is." said Mercury coyly, her bow generating another arrow for her to fire.

Diablo grinned at Mercury and he charged off towards Dark Oak to smash his face in with his mace. Dark Oak jumped back to his feet and the two clashed weapons with one another.

Meanwhile, Dranzer was picking off Seedrian soldiers one by one with his handheld laser cannon which was held underneath his arms (bit like a handheld rotary cannon like you see in Star Wars). He was standing up on a nearby lump of rock about twelve feet high above the ground and he just aimed and shot at the Seedrian soldiers, killing them all in an instant. There were many soldiers so he'd be up here for a while. That is until Yellow Zelkova stepped in to help his men. He stood in the way of the laser cannon, shielding the soldiers and he took the shots easily given his tough, bulky armour. Dranzer grumbled to himself as he fired at Yellow Zelkova only for his shot to ricochet of Zelkova's armour harmlessly. He couldn't stand Yellow Zelkova at all and his laser cannon was useless against him so he just simply put it away and bent down in a battle ready stance. Zelkova bashed his fists together.

"You like to do your dirty work from a distance." taunted Yellow Zelkova "Pity you don't have the ball bearings to get up close and personal!"

"In this particular case, I am all too happy to make an exception."

snorted Dranzer.

Dranzer then leaped off the rock and hurled towards Yellow Zelkova with his fist stretched out. Yellow Zelkova threw a powerful punch at the oncoming Dranzer but Dranzer managed to brush his arm to the side and land down on the ground. He then wheeled around and roundhouse punched Yellow Zelkova in the back of his head. Yellow Zelkova was sent hurtling down onto his face but he wasn't down for long. He picked himself up and threw a punch at Dranzer but Dranzer jumped back to dodge it. The punch just narrowly swept by his stomach. Dranzer then clenched his fists and brought them slamming down onto Yellow Zelkova's head. But Yellow Zelkova wasn't fazed by the attack. He bent down and rammed into Dranzer like a charging rhino. He carried Dranzer over to the landing legs of the Martian ship and slammed him into it. Dranzer however managed to push Zelkova off of himself and knee him in the gut. Zelkova backed off and Dranzer then roundhouse kicked Yellow Zelkova in the face. Zelkova staggered backwards and clutched his face. If he wasn't wearing a helmet then this really would have been a more painful attack. Zelkova charged towards Dranzer and the two linked arms with one another. Dranzer won that struggle though by kneeing Zelkova in the gut and getting him to bend over. Dranzer then grabbed Zelkova by the shoulders and threw him across the battlefield. Yellow Zelkova hurled through the air and he came down with a heavy crash. Dranzer charged towards Yellow Zelkova and prepared to grab him again. But Yellow Zelkova picked himself up and uppercut Dranzer in the face with both hands. That attack sent Dranzer hurling up into the air and he crashed down a good few feet away from Zelkova. Yellow Zelkova ran up to Dranzer and the moment Dranzer stood back up, Yellow Zelkova began to whale on him as hard as he possibly could. Dranzer took some of the blows but he couldn't hold all of them off and Zelkova eventually managed to get a well aimed gut-punch that sent him flying backwards into the landing leg of the Martian ship. Had he hit it any harder, he might have broken the leg clean off. Yellow Zelkova advanced on Dranzer and he cracked his knuckles.

"I have enjoyed this confrontation with you Dranzer and I appreciate your effort." crowed Zelkvoa "But yet again, you have fallen to the mighty of the all powerful, all mighty, all invincible Yellow Zelkova!

Not surprising considering I am the strongest, most powerful Seedrian warrior ever! Nobody can match my strength, nobody…"

"Oh do silence that accursed mouth of yours!" snarled Dranzer, getting back up to his feet and shoulder-ramming Zelkova in the chest.

You see, Zelkova was a bit of an egotist, taking far too much pride in his strength and as a result, tends to lose focus in battle and then get clobbered as a result. Zelkova growled at Dranzer and the two ended up linking arms with one another again. But Dranzer had a shiny trump card in this game that was going to give Yellow Zelkova more than he bargained for. Obelisk had decided to run in and help his twin brother. While Zelkova and Dranzer grappled with one another, Obelisk ran in and walloped Yellow Zelkova in the face with a powerful punch. Alone, the two twins were deadly but together, they were a force to be reckoned with. Dranzer smirked at Zelkova as he was brought down by the punch and Obelisk then added insult to injury by kicking Zelkova up into the air. Zelkova hurled through the air in a rainbow arch and he crashed down onto the ground. Dranzer and Obelisk gave each other a bro-fist.

"Thank you kindly brother." said Dranzer.

"It was my pleasure brother." boomed Obelisk brightly "After all, Zelkova cannot match the two of us in battle."

Yellow Zelkova picked himself up and he flexed his muscles.

"You'll pay for that you insolent Martians!" growled Zelkova.

"No we won't Zelkova." boomed Obelisk "You will pay for all you've done throughout this war."

He then drew out his handheld rotary cannon and opened fire on Zelkova. His gun was considerably stronger than Dranzer's so his gun had some kind of effect on the tough Seedrian's armour. The laser bullets ricocheted off Zelkova's armour but they hit him at such a powerful force that they sent him staggering backwards. The were beginning to scratch and dent his armour the more Obelisk fired at him and to add insult to injury, Dranzer drew out his laser cannon

and began shooting at Yellow Zelkova too. The Seedrian strongman was quickly beginning to get overwhelmed by the bombardment of firepower. The twins then put their guns away and they drew out a sword each. They ran up to Yellow Zelkova but Zelkova lunged up and blocked the blows with his arms before they could sever anything with their swords. The two Martians and one Seedrian began pushing on one another, trying to gain an advantage over one another.

Meanwhile, while this big epic fight was going on between the Seedrians and Martians, Sycranna had boarded a hover-saucer and was following the mysterious ship that had appeared in the sky but had generally gone unnoticed because everybody was in battle right now. It was a Seedrian evacuation ship, the very ships used to evacuate the Seedrian children and Sycranna had a sneaky feeling that a Seedrian child was in the ship. If so then he was going to kidnap that child and force it to tell him where the Seedrian children had been evacuated to so the Martians could kill them all. Killing all the children was bound to wound the Seedrian army badly enough for them to lessen their battle prowess. Not to mention it would stop the Seedrians from having any hope of survival. Sycranna kept his beady eyes on the ship and watched as it was nearing the ground and preparing to land. The moment it landed, he would seize the pilot and take the pilot back to the ship secretly and then he would make the pilot tell him what he wanted and once he got the information he required, he'd then kill the pilot and tell Diablo everything. How pleased Diablo would be when he told him where the Seedrian children had been evacuated! He'd get a promotion easily for sure! Killing Red Pine AND discovering the Seedrian children's whereabouts was bound to be good enough for a promotion after all. Sycranna smiled slimily as the ship finally begun to land.

"The ship begins to land. I've got you now whoever resides in that ship." he purred wickedly to himself "And you will be my key to a better rank in the army…"

His hover saucer continued to near the ship as it was beginning to land. The ship's landing legs had extended out and it descended

down and down until it's "feet" touched down onto the war-torn land of Greengate. The ship hissed loudly as its descent finally finished and Sycranna parked his hover saucer just behind the ship. The ship's boarding ramp lowered down onto the ground and out walked the ship's pilot. The pilot was a female Seedrian that looked to be about 12 years old. She looked like Cosmo only her leafy hair was teal instead of green, the tips of her skirt were teal, her top was teal and the gem on her chest was green. On the top of her head seemed to be a blooming flower with white petals and she had the most gorgeous purple eyes. Sycranna grinned like a gremlin at the mere sight of this Seedrian for he knew *exactly* who it was.

"What serendipity indeed…" he purred "It's Galaxina, the eldest daughter of Earthia and Dark Oak. Looks like she's here because she's missing her feeble minded parents. Well she won't get the chance to meet them again…"

He waited until Galaxina had stepped down from the ship and she looked around to survey her scenery. Her heart almost burst at the sight of Greengate around her. Plant life had been completely destroyed, the land had been war-torn and everything had been desecrated. This was NOT what Greengate looked like when she left to the Seedrian's twin planet. How it pained her to see her beautiful home world in this kind of ruination. The war had clearly gotten worse in her absence.

"Oh my god…" she said to herself "The world's in ruin…no wonder I was so worried about my mother and father, the war's just getting worse. I have to find them and see if they're alright. With any luck, they'll let me help them in this war. I don't want to spend my time as an evacuee, I really want to help them…"

Then suddenly, Sycranna pounced on Galaxina and clasped his hand around her mouth, preventing her from screaming. Galaxina gasped a muffled gasp and she struggled to get free. But Sycranna was too strong for a mere child like herself. She was not getting away from him at all.

"Ha, got you child!" sneered Sycranna "Now I you can tell me where you and the other children have been evacuated to!"

Galaxina let out a muffled "Huh?!" from behind Sycranna's hand. Sycranna then hoisted Galaxina off the ground and stuffed her in the hover-saucer. Sycranna climbed in and started it up again. The saucer raised off the ground and Sycranna prepared to drive away. Sycranna then got out a pair of laser-cuffs that he'd brought with him and put them on Galaxina's wrists. In order to prevent her from getting away, he linked the laser cuffs to his belt so she couldn't jump out of the saucer or something, making her escape impossible.

"Let me go!" cried Galaxina "You can't do this to me! Let me go right now!"

"Oh I don't think so Galaxina." purred Sycranna in a very creepy fashion "You are coming with me. And we're going to have a little chat…"

Sycranna then drove off in the hover-saucer with Galaxina as his prisoner passenger. In order to prevent Galaxina from crying for help, Sycranna got out a metal clamp and he clamped it around Galaxina's head just over the mouth and under the eyes. Galaxina could not scream for help at all. The clamp was such a good gag that you couldn't even hear her mumbling behind it. Galaxina was not getting away from Sycranna at all. She was his prisoner and Sycranna was bound to do terrible things to her the moment he arrived back home…

As for the battle, Dranzer and Obelisk seemed to have their battle with Yellow Zelkova under control so let's focus on somebody else now.

Mercury and Myra were teaming up against Black Narcissus and a bunch of Seedrian soldiers. The soldiers were no contest for the girls of course. Mercury took them down with one simple arrow and Myra used her hammer to smash them into the ground. But on a couple of soldiers, she decided to use her hammer's secret power. She aimed the hammer at two soldiers and from the sides fired a pair of collars. The collars whizzed towards the soldiers and then clamped around their necks. And now comes the reason why Myra's hammer is called a "magnetism hammer". Myra activated the

hammers power and the two Seedrian soldiers instantly became attracted to her. You see, the hammer had magnetic powers and the collars made anyone who wasn't made of metal able to be attracted by the magnet. The soldiers ended up being attracted to the magnet because of the collars around their necks so Myra now had two Seedrian soldiers stuck to her hammer. She swung the hammer and sent the two soldiers hurling away. They both crashed down a couple of yards away from the battle and the collars around their necks detached themselves and were called back to the hammer for next time Myra needed them. Myra smiled happily at her hammer.

"Oh baby I love you as much as I love Dranzer." she purred to herself "You're so helpful to me in this battle."

As for Mercury, she had taken down the rest of the soldiers and now she was against Black Narcissus. She fired an arrow at Black Narcissus but the Seedrian soldier held his staff mirror in front of himself and the mirror deflected the arrow (mirrors deflect laser blasts remember?). Mercury grumbled to herself for she REALLY hated it when Black Narcissus used his mirror to deflect her shots. Mercury aimed at Black Narcissus' foot but Narcissus was still able to block the blow with his mirror. He then swung the staff at Mercury and tripped her up by taking her legs out from underneath her. Mercury landed on her back and she grimaced in pain. Black Narcissus then took a moment from the battle to admire himself in his mirror (he's very vain hence the name "Narcissus").

"My moves are almost as dashing as my looks." he crowed "Well a good looking fellow like me will always have dashing moves to match."

"Do you ever stop admiring yourself?" snorted Mercury, leaping up onto her feet and charging at Black Narcissus.

Black Narcissus tried to whack Mercury with his mirror staff but Mercury jumped over the staff and then dropkicked Black Narcissus in the face. The vain Seedrian leader was brought down onto the ground and he dropped his staff. Mercury quickly grabbed it and she smashed the mirror on top of Black Narcissus's head. Narcissus was furious to see his precious mirror broken and shattered to pieces.

"You broke my mirror!" snarled Narcissus.

"Good, means you don't have to look at yourself anymore." retorted Mercury, picking up her bow and preparing to fire at him.

Black Narcissus knew that if one of Mercury's arrows touched him, the result would be catastrophic for Mercury's arrows explode when they hit non-organic material and that includes body armour so he jumped up and dodged the arrow before it could hit him. Narcissus then ran over to Mercury and walloped her with the staff. Mercury shook off the attack and she put her bow away. She ran over to Black Narcissus and punched him in the visor. She then kneed Narcissus in the gut (thank goodness she's wearing knee pads or that would have hurt) and made him double over and she slammed him down onto the ground. Narcissus picked himself up and then roundhouse punched Mercury in the face. But before he could do anything else, Myra used her magnetism hammer on him and because his armour was metal, the hammer attracted him and pulled him away from Mercury. Myra then set the hammer to repel so just as Narcissus was about to stick to her hammer, he was sent flying forwards as the hammer repelled him and he crashed down onto the ground a good few yards away from the girls. Mercury patted Myra on the shoulder.

"Now that's what I call "girl power" Myra!" she said happily.

"Thanks Mercury." said Myra "You'd think the Seedrians would have learned not to wear metal since my hammer can just attract and repel them."

"And it's thanks to your hammer that we're even still alive in this war." said Mercury "Now let's smash Narcissus's face in and show him how ugly he really is!"

Myra nodded and the girls charged off to deal with Narcissus.

As for Pale Bay Leaf, he and a bunch of soldiers were fighting Nyder, Marik, Silas and Sierra. Pale Bay Leaf was fighting off Nyder with his twin swords and Nyder was armed with a rifle and he was shooting at Pale Bay Leaf while keeping his distance from the dangerous Seedrian soldier. Bay Leaf took the shots for his armour

was tough enough to resist the blasts but Nyder was getting a bit bothersome, constantly jumping back to avoid his blades as he tried to slice him in two. Marik and his siblings were having an easy time with the soldiers of course. Silas sliced the Seedrians in two with his sword, Sierra shot them with her arm mounted crossbow and Marik electrocuted them with a jolt of electricity from his metal claws. The Seedrian soldiers were electrocuted and he threw them back with a lunge of his arm. Sierra looked over to Marik.

"Wow. Impressive brother. Your metal hand is very good isn't it?" she cooed to him.

"Thank you Sierra and yes, the electrical abilities this metal hand possess truly is magnificent isn't it?" crowed Marik "I ought to thank the Mobians for giving me a reason to give myself this metal hand for I feel it's going to be my shiny trump card in this war."

"Quit fawning over yourself Marik and get back in the battle!" shouted Silas "We've still got Seedrians to kill yet!"

"You mind your own business Silas and concentrate on your end!" snarled Marik.

Marik and Silas really do not get along at all, not even in battle. Silas sighed at Marik but he continued fighting off the Seedrians with his sword. Marik and Sierra scoffed at Silas and they diverted their attention back over to the Seedrians. Some Seedrian soldiers came at them with guns in their hands but Marik swept them off their feet with a simple energy wave. And before they could get back up, Sierra shot them dead with a laser arrow from her arm-mounted crossbow. The Martian children had this battle in the bag. Nyder however was still having trouble with Pale Bay Leaf. Given how he had a projectile weapon and pale Pay Leaf had swords and armour that could resist his shots, it was hard for Nyder to fight back. He kept having to keep his distance and keep shooting until his rifle actually makes an impact on Pale Bay Leaf. But it didn't seem that that was going to be happening anytime soon. Nyder just ditched his weapon and run up to Pale Bay Leaf. Pale Bay Leaf tried to slice Nyder in two with his blade weapons but Nyder grabbed his wrists and made him drop them. Nyder shoved Pale Bay Leaf back and he picked up Bay Leaf's swords. But Pale Bay Leaf simply conjured up

another pair of swords from airspace (he can do that, I'm not making this up Sonic X fans!) and twirled them around.

"You forget that I never run out of swords." gloated Pale Bay Leaf.

"So what?" snorted Nyder "Just means that I'll keep having swords to steal from you."

The two then began clashing swords with one another.

As for Dark Oak, he was against Diablo and Natasha was keeping his back up at bay. Diablo and Dark Oak's fight was even sided but Natasha's fight was completely in her favour. She just walloped the Seedrians with her spiked nunchakus and knocked them down or killed them depending on how she hit them. Diablo and Dark Oak's battle was far more eventful though. They clashed weapons and threw punches at each other while taking each other's blows. Diablo walloped Dark Oak with his mace but the attack only left a dent on Dark Oak's helmet. Dark Oak swiped his sword at Diablo and the tip of the sword just managed to catch Diablo across the mouth. It didn't leave a serious cut or anything and Diablo shrugged it off as merely a scratch. Diablo put his mace away and uppercut Dark Oak into the air. Dark Oak dropped his sword and landed down onto the ground a few feet away from Diablo. Diablo lumbered towards Dark Oak but Dark Oak picked himself up and roundhouse punched Diablo in the face. He then gut-punched Diablo and jumped up into the air. He kicked Diablo with both legs and sent him hurling backwards. The muscular Martian came down with a crash that could shake an entire room. Diablo picked himself up and Dark Oak ran towards him at top speed. Diablo drew his arm back and punched Dark Oak back across the battlefield. Dark Oak crashed into some debris from the destroyed cannons and Diablo lumbered towards him. Dark Oak leaped back onto his feet and the two linked hands with one another.

"An admirable effort as always Dark Oak but you forget how these encounters with me always end!" crowed Diablo "Me damaging your armour heavily and forcing you to retreat!"

"I am aware of that." said Dark Oak "But this encounter will end with me victorious for once since I am not holding back this time!"

Dark Oak then clawed Diablo across the face and made him scream in pain. Dark Oak then rammed Diablo down and kicked him across the ground. Diablo picked himself up and threw a massive punch at Dark Oak. Dark Oak dodged and punched Diablo in the face. Diablo shook off the punch and he and Dark Oak punched at each other again.

While all this was happening, the messenger woman Rozarr had stolen a bazooka from the weaponry and she had sneaked onto the battlefield. She was not allowed to be on the battlefield since messenger women aren't allowed to fight (but messenger men are. Pretty sexist eh?) but she didn't care. She was here to kill Natasha and take Diablo for herself and that's all there was to it. Rozarr made sure she was far away from the battle so nobody would notice her and she aimed the bazooka at Natasha. She smiled to herself as she prepared to commit the terrible deed.

"Ha, ha, ha. You're dead now Natasha." she purred to herself "And that serves you right from taking my Diablo from me. With you dead, I will become his new wife and you will be pushing up Martian rocks."

She then made sure her aim was perfect and she pulled the trigger. The bazooka fired an enormous rocket and it hurled towards Natasha. Natasha heard the rocket coming unfortunately and she ran for it before the rocket could hit her. To her bad luck though, a Seedrian soldier was in the way and the rocket hit HIM instead, causing it to explode before she was out of range and the force of the explosion killed all the Seedrians around him and sent Natasha hurling forwards and into the landing leg of the Martian ship. The blast knocked her out and her headwear fell off, revealing her bald head laden with bony lumps on the cranium (you can imagine why she wears the headwear then). Rozarr, pleased to see the deed seemingly done, ran back into the ship with the empty bazooka. Nobody noticed her for they were too busy fighting, allowing her to make a clean getaway. Diablo heard what had happened and he ran over to Natasha, unable to believe what had just happened to her. He'd even seen the rocket too so he was worried sick on what had just happened. Dark Oak tried to stop Diablo he saw that Black Narcissus was in need of assistance so instead, he abandoned his

battle with Diablo and ran off to help his friend. Diablo kneeled down by Natasha's side and he picked her up bridal style in his arms.

"Natasha? Natasha?! Are you alright?!" cried Diablo "Natasha?! Natasha!"

Natasha didn't answer him for she was knocked out. Marik, Silas and Sierra could hear Diablo screaming Natasha's name over and over in anguish and the three kids ran over to see what was wrong. Their battle was pretty much over anyway so they were free to see how anyone else was doing. They ran over to Diablo and stood by his side.

"Dad, dad! What's wrong?" asked Marik.

"Oh my gosh! Mother!" shrieked Silas "She's been hurt!"

Marik, Silas and Sierra stared at Natasha's unconscious body in horror and they began to feel worried for their mother. Was she dead? They hoped not, they'd already lost an uncle, they couldn't bear to lose their mother as well.

"Mommy?" asked Sierra worriedly "Is…is she…?"

"Dad, what happened to her?!" cried Marik.

"I think someone tried to shot a rocket at her." said Diablo "I saw a rocket whizz past and then there was an explosion and then…I just saw her lying next to the landing leg. I think the rocket might have hit her."

"It can't have daddy, she doesn't look like she's been hit by it." noted Sierra, pointing out that Natasha looked pretty much OK aside from a few scorch marks and the fact she was knocked out "She looks mostly OK for someone who's been hit by a rocket."

"I think the rocket missed by the force of the explosion blew her into the landing leg." guessed Marik "Lucky for mother. We have to get her out of here now dad!"

"I agree son." said Diablo "I will not let any other rockets hit her or anyone else. We must fall back before more of those rockets come

flying our way."

"But we're winning dad!" protested Silas.

"Do you want to risk anyone else getting hit by a rocket?!" snarled Diablo.

"No!" squeaked Silas.

"Then we have to flee for it!" snapped Diablo "Marik, tell everybody we're retreating while I get your mother to safety!"

"Yes dad." said Marik, running off as fast as he could on his jet shoes.

Diablo picked up Natasha and ran onboard the ship with her in his arms. Sierra ran after him. Marik ran out into the battlefield and he put his hands to his mouth. He shouted out towards the other Martians.

"Everybody! Fall back! We're retreating! Repeat, we are retreating! Fall back, fall back, FALL BACK!" he bellowed.

Everybody heard Marik's call and they abandoned their battles. They ran off towards the ship and as they were doing so, Sycranna had just arrived back to the ship and he sneaked back onboard it by going around the back and flying through a boarding window in his hover-saucer. He couldn't understand why everybody was retreating. Were they losing or had something happened that forced them to retreat? No matter, Sycranna would find out in a minute for he was likely to be briefed on everything. Oh well, Galaxina as his prisoner would make the Martians happy but only when he wanted them to know and that's why he was being so secretive right now. As Sycranna made it back onboard, all the Martians had boarded the ship and the boarding ramp raised up, preventing anybody from getting inside it. The Seedrians couldn't understand why the Martians had decided to fall back. They were winning for crying out loud! What had just made them retreat?!

"Why have the Martians fallen back into their ship?" asked Pale Bay Leaf.

"Did we managed to scare them off?" asked Yellow Zelkova.

"Hardly, they were winning." noted Black Narcissus who was fuming at his broken mirror "Something else must have happened."

"Whatever the reason it does not matter." said Dark Oak in his robotically enhanced voice "The Martians have retreated so now we may destroy their ship with them on it."

"Negative sir, we do not have the right resources to destroy the ship now our cannons are down and we cannot get onboard." noted Black Narcissus "We cannot destroy the ship."

"Then we will fall back ourselves and come back with explosive weaponry!" snapped Dark Oak "Seedrians, we are retreating back to the palace! We will recuperate for a few minutes and then come back with more cannons, more soldiers and some bombs."

"Yes sir." said the surviving Seedrians.

There were only ten soldiers and the four leaders left alive. They all left the battlefield and retreated back to the Seedrian palace. As a result of both sides falling back, this battle had technically come to a draw. Neither side had won. A rare occurrence in this war. But despite the outcome, chances are the war would resume again and then more bloodshed was going to happen…

Meanwhile, Sycranna had taken Galaxina down to the dungeons for interrogation. He had decided to bring Zarondight with him since he felt the need for Zarondight to record what Galaxina was telling him in case he forgot what she told him or if he needed evidence of what he'd found out for Diablo. Not to mention, Zarondight often had the best torture weapons. Galaxina soon found herself chained up in the dark dungeon and at the mercy of Sycranna. Chains were wrapped around her wrists and she was dangling off the floor by her wrists at about Sycranna's eye line so she could look him directly in the eye. The chains dung into Galaxina's wrists and made them throb ever so badly. Her hands were likely to be disabled after this once she eventually got down. Galaxina wept to herself, fearing on what was

going to happen to her. Sycranna cackled smoothly to himself as he sadistically watched the chained up Seedrian cry to herself. How he loved to hear his victims cry. He then turned to the looming Zarondight.

"As you can see, I have apprehended the eldest child of Earthia and Dark Oak Zarondight." crowed Sycranna "And I barely had to do anything too, just grab the child and run with her. It was as simple as that."

Zarondight nodded. He already gathered this from the obvious fact there was a chained up Seedrian dangling by her wrists before them but he knew Sycranna liked to boast and he liked to egg him on shamelessly since he quite liked his boasting for some odd reason. Sycranna continued to gloat (expect him to do much of this).

"How clever of me it was to think of such a brilliant idea." boasted Sycranna "March over to a Seedrian evacuation ship, kidnap it's pilot and then interrogate it on the location of the evacuees! Who would have thought of something so brilliant?"

Zarondight frowned at him and Sycranna could tell what he meant by his expression. He folded his arms and scowled at Zarondight.

"OK fine, if you hadn't have spotted the sodding ship then I wouldn't have come up with the plan so yes, you're to thank for all of this, thank you very much!" snapped Sycranna quickly "Grrr…picky one aren't you?"

Zarondight just put his hands on his hips and fumed at him. Sycranna just scoffed off his frowning and turned to Galaxina.

"Whatever Zarondight." sighed Sycranna "Now on to the interrogation…"

He strode up to the snivelling Galaxina and lifted her face up to his face with a long, thin claw. Galaxina, still weeping, stared into his eyes and gulped. Her heart began racing. What was he going to do to her?

"All I ask is one simple request that will save your family the pain of

grieving…" purred Sycranna "Tell me the location of the evacuated Seedrian children and I will allow your heart to remain in your chest where it belongs."

Galaxina just spat into his eye. Sycranna growled loudly and he rubbed the spit out of his eye.

"How dare you show such insolence in my presence?!" he growled, punching Galaxina and sending her writhing around like a punching bag that's just been punched.

Galaxina spun around for a bit until she stopped and was now back to dangling above the floor as before. She was still crying to herself. Sycranna grabbed her face again.

"Again…tell me the location of the evacuees!" snarled Sycranna "If not then I will have to torture you mercilessly!"

"Go ahead…do it…sniff…I don't care!" dared Galaxina "I'm not telling to a damn thing!"

"Well you're asking for it my child so I'll give it to you!" barked Sycranna "Zarondight, torture her!"

Zarondight obeyed and he stepped forward. In his hand was a staff with a clamp on it. He pressed it against Galaxina's belly and the clamp fastened around her waist. Galaxina snorted.

"A clamp? That's it? Is that how you're going to torture me?" she sniffed.

"You'll change your tone once Zarondight activates it." sneered Sycranna "Start at medium voltage Zarondight."

Zarondight obeyed and he twisted a knob on the clamp. Then he pressed a button on the staff and Galaxina was suddenly electrocuted quite brutally by the clamp at the end of the staff. This was an electro clamp and it was one of the Martian's best torture weapons. It was also used to capture livestock back on Mars when they went hunting. Galaxina screamed loud enough to make any windows shatter as she was electrocuted brutally by the clamp. And this was only at medium voltage too, imagine what full voltage might

to do her! Galaxina's pained screams echoed around the dungeon and Sycranna was laughing maniacally at her.

"Is there anything more fun than torturing a pathetic child like her?!" cackled Sycranna "Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Zarondight eventually stopped electrocuting Galaxina and gave her a moment to rest. Galaxina gasped for breath, electricity crackling around her as it died away. She looked down at the floor and waited for Sycranna to come to her. Sycranna strode up to her again and he lifted Galaxina's head up to his face. He flashed a hideous smile that even his mother would have been repulsed by.

"Now then Galaxina, if you don't want that to happen again, tell me where the evacuees are being housed." purred Sycranna menacingly "Just give me what I want and you shall be set free. A Martian's Promise."

Galaxina sniffed at Sycranna.

"I didn't…come all this way…just to…tell you…where me and the other children…have been evacuated to!" she snapped "I'd rather you just kill me now…then me tell you anything!"

"Grrr…that's what they always say." muttered Sycranna "But they never really mean it for they end up cracking in the end…now tell me what I want to know for the last time!"

"No!" snapped Galaxina "I will not tell you anything! And that…is final!"

"We'll see if you change your disgusting attitude after full voltage!" snarled Sycranna "Zarondight, give it to her at maximum voltage!"

Zarondight nodded and he switched the voltage up to maximum. The clamp was still on Galaxina so all he had to do was just switch it on. Galaxina was then brutally electrocuted again only this time, the voltage was even worse. Galaxina was electrocuted even more badly now the voltage was up to maximum. Sycranna laughed again as his prisoner was electrocuted. She'd crack eventually or his name wasn't Scyranna…

Meanwhile, Natasha had been hurried to the medical bay by Diablo and a Martian doctor was seeing to her immediately. As he examined the unconscious Natasha, the other Martians were conversing to each other.

"So we retreated because Natasha was almost hit by a stray rocket?" asked Dranzer.

"I don't see why we've had to. It's not the first time we've seen those Seedrian vermin use rocket launchers or bazookas or such before." boomed Obelisk.

"I believe the reasoning behind all of this is that Natasha was almost hit by one and we weren't prepared for rocket launchers for we did not anticipate one." suggested Nyder "The Seedrians could have had a secret back-up and the backup was armed with the one weapon we weren't ready for."

"That's a good theory." said Mercury "And it makes sense too. I mean who else would be using a rocket launcher on us? I do hope Natasha's OK. We've lost Count Drago, we don't need to lose our Grand War Mistress too."

"She seemed OK." said Myra "She doesn't seem too badly hurt. She had a close call from what Diablo's described to us."

"She did and all." muttered Diablo "I SAW the rocket that almost hit her. It hit another Seedrian instead and the force of the explosion must have sent her flying and knocked her out. I do hope she hasn't been killed by the impact."

"I will tear out every heart of those Seedrians if mother's dead because of them!" growled Marik fiercely, his metal hand crackling with electricity.

"I'm with you on that Marik!" agreed Silas "Nobody tries to kill our mother and gets away with it!"

"Yeah!" cried Sierra, joining in with her brothers.

"Sssshhh, quiet children." said Diablo softly "The doctor's trying to

work."

"Actually sire, I'm finished now." said the doctor.

Diablo turned around to face the doctor.

"Well doctor? Will she live? Will she be alright?" asked Diablo anxiously.

"The poor dear…will pull through." said the doctor brightly "She's just knocked out. She has no broken bones or anything. Just a few scorch marks that's all. She just needs plenty of rest right now."

"Good." said Diablo "Thank you doctor."

"You're welcome sire." said the doctor brightly.

"Whew…thank Tyrahko for that!" sighed Marik "Mum's going to live!"

"Your mother's really lucky Marik." said Diablo "If that rocket had managed to hit her then she would be dead. We're lucky she managed to get away before the rocket itself could get her. The force of the explosion hitting her is better than the rocket hitting her."

"I agree dad." said Silas "So what are we gonna do now we know mum's OK?"

"We are going to storm the Seedrian palace!" announced Diablo "We will all go over there and storm the palace! We'll bring all our best weapons and we'll make sure that nobody leaves that palace alive! That'll teach them to try and kill my wife!"

"I like that idea dad but do you think it'll be a wise move?" asked Marik "I mean, what if the palace is heavily guarded?"

"Let it be, we'll storm it regardless of how powerful it is!" snapped Diablo "For now though, we'll recuperate. Meet me in the war room in half an hour and then we'll prepare to storm the Seedrian palace. Got it?"

"Yes lord Diablo." said the Martians.

"Good." said Diablo "Now, you may feel free to leave the medical room. I'm gonna stay with Natasha for a while."

The Martians all obeyed and they left the room. Diablo and the doctor were the only ones in the room with Natasha now and Diablo knelt down by her side. He took her hand into his hand and he kissed it tenderly.

"You're going to be alright babe. And we're going to get revenge on the ones who did this to you." swore Diablo "I promise my angel. I love you and I hope you'll wake up soon. Until then, sleep easy my girl. Sleep easy…"

"Very touching sire." said the doctor "I'm sure your wife would love to hear that."

"Thank you doctor. I'm just thankful she'll live." said Diablo "I do wonder who's the sick jerk who dared to launch a rocket at her?"

"Some heartless Seedrian warrior I suppose." suggested the doctor "Clever of them to have such a sneak attack I definitely must say…"

Unbeknownst to the two of them, Rozarr was spying on them from outside the room and she was furious to see that Natasha had survived and was going to live. What did she have to do to get rid of the damn War Mistress?! Rozarr strode off down the corridor and she punched the wall angrily.

"Dammit to Tyrahko!" she screamed aloud "The witch survived my assassination attempt! Grrr! What does it take to kill that stupid, ugly War Mistress?! Oh well, if I can't kill her with a rocket launcher then perhaps I can kill her while she's still sleeping…"

She smiled to herself as she thought of another plan to get rid of Natasha. Ooooh that girl was going to be dead once she was finished with her! And this next plan of hers was sure to work since Natasha was bedbound…

Back in the dungeons, Zarondight had finished torturing Galaxina and was now giving her a moment to rest. He unclamped her and

stood back with the electro-clamp in his hands. There was a HORRENDOUS scorch mark around Galaxina's waist. Galaxina was lucky to still be alive after all of that shocking. She was now gasping for breath and crying to herself again. Sycranna grinned like a vampire at her and he jammed his face into her face again.

"Did the poor little girl find that experience horrifying?" sneered Sycranna.

"Yes…" gasped Galaxina hoarsely. She then let out a throaty cough "Please…please…just…just let me down…please…"

"I will Galaxina but only if you tell me what I wish to know." purred Sycranna "Now…the location of the evacuees please."

Galaxina just glared at Sycranna and coughed in his face. Sycranna took that as "I'm not talking!" and he just growled at her.

"Do you want me to kill you Galaxina?!" snarled Sycranna.

"No…" said Galaxina "But…you won't…kill me…anyway…a dead…prisoner…can't talk…after all…"

"You are right on that admittedly." fumed Sycranna "Well if I can't make you talk then I'll just have to reach inside your head and pluck the information clean out of your brain."

Galaxina looked shocked. Was Sycranna going to rip her brain out and scan it for information or something? She began to tremble with fear.

"Oh no…please, not that…!" shrieked Galaxina.

"Clam down you simpering child, I'm not going to cut your head open or anything! I'm merely going to use a Visual Mind-Reader Link."

He then suddenly slashed Galaxina's chains to pieces, allowing her to drop down onto the floor. Galaxina landed on the floor with a thud and she rubbed her wrists tenderly. Her wrists had scars that would never go away thanks to the chains that had been wrapped around them. Sycranna picked Galaxina up and threw her into Zarondight's

arms.

"Patch her up to the Visual Mind-Reader Link." ordered Sycranna "We're going to find out the information by reading her mind. And it'll be a visual experience…"

Zarondight nodded and he carried Galaxina off to a bed with straps on it. Galaxina's nightmare was just beginning. She'd been tortured mercilessly and now she was going to have her mind read like a book and Sycranna was going to get the information he so desired regardless of what happened next…

Oh uh! Galaxina's just about to give the information Sycranna needs! Will he succeed in reading her mind and getting the information he needs? Or will she be saved in time? And how about Natasha? Will Rozarr get rid of her? And how about the other Martians? Will their onslaught work or are they just going with a plan that's gaurenteed to fail? Find out in the next exciting part to this epic saga!

Hey, I don't mean to sound annoyed or anything but can more of you people read and review this story? You REALLY do need to read this if you're reading Heroes of Mobius as well since you'll be missing out on a lot of in-between stories. I didn't make this thing for nothing you know. And I'd really like more reviews on it too so I know what you all think to Tales from Mobius as well as Heroes of Mobius.

The Final Frontier 3

Arc 16: The Final Frontier

The Martian Invasion Prologue

Takes place during Stories 120-125 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 3

Diablo peeped into the medical room to check on his recovering wife. Natasha was still sleeping away on the bed, still unconscious but slowly recovering from that incident on the battlefield earlier. Diablo loved Natasha dearly and he always got worried whenever she was hurt or anything. Martians may love war and such, but their love for each other is stronger than any war they'd ever fought. It was settling for Diablo that Natasha wasn't even seriously hurt and that was the main thing to be happy about. Rockets have done much worse to them before so Natasha was lucky to have survived that rocket. But when the Martians next attacked the Seedrians, the Seedrians wouldn't GET to use a rocket on them ever again. For in ten minutes, they were going to storm the Seedrian palace and make sure that nobody left that palace alive. They were going to kill every last Seedrian and if it took them another year, they vowed that they would win this war.

"Don't worry Natasha, we'll kill the Seedrians and make them pay for what they've done to you." purred Diablo "Don't you worry my sweet…"

Diablo then closed the door and strode away from the medical room…and he bumped directly into Rozarr. Rozarr was thrown down onto the floor by that bump. Bumping into Diablo is like bumping into a large boulder, you end up thrown backwards after you hit it. Diablo gasped in surprise and he helped Rozarr back onto her feet.

"Rozarr! Sorry about that my messenger woman!" cried Diablo "I

didn't see you there."

"It's alright Warlord." said Rozarr hastily "I should watch where I'm going."

"So what are you doing here?" asked Diablo suspiciously with a raised eyebrow.

"I was just looking for you." lied Rozarr "I was looking for you so I could deliver a message to you."

This wasn't entirely a lie since she did have a message for Diablo, she just wasn't actually looking for him. She was back to kill the bed bound Natasha and thus, had to hide her real intentions.

"Well that is your job after all Rozarr, deliver messages to me. So what have you got to report then?" asked Diablo.

Due to how much Rozarr loved Diablo, she enjoyed giving him messages. Heck, she enjoyed just talking to him in general, never mind delivering messages! Any moment with Diablo was wonderful for Rozarr. She really did love him as much as Natasha did. Eagerly, Rozarr gave off her report.

"I'm happy to announce that the soldiers are resting nicely and preparing for combat, the tanks are ready to go out into the battlefield and Count Nyder is marking good posts for us to strike from." she announced truthfully.

"Well I'm happy to hear that." said Diablo brightly "Those Seedrian scumbags will all perish today for trying to kill my wife!"

"My heart bleeds for poor Natasha right now sir." lied Rozarr "I do hope she makes a rapid recovery."

"Thank you." said Diablo "Even though you and Natasha have a… difficult relationship with each other, it's nice to know you wish her the best."

"Well I have to respect the Grand Warlord's beautiful wife don't I?" said Rozarr "There's no point to just being loyal to one Warlord right?"

"Indeed." said Diablo with a smile "Well thanks for the report and I hope you have some more good messages to tell me soon Rozarr."

"I'll make sure I get some good news just for you Diablo." beamed Rozarr happily.

"Good." said Diablo "Bye for now Rozarr, I'm off to see my kids right now."

"OK, goodbye for now Diablo." said Rozarr, resisting the urge to call him a pet name "And tell your kids I said "hi"."

"I will my dear." said Diablo, striding off down the corridor to meet Marik, Silas and Sierra.

The moment Diablo left though, Rozarr's face changed. She grinned wickedly to herself and she sneaked into the medical room. She was pretty pleased to hear that Diablo called her "my dear". That was a sign that he had some kind of respect for her. Maybe catching Diablo on the rebound would be easier then she imagined. She was also pleased that her lying had convinced Diablo that she was good and she had no ill will with Natasha. Now she was in the clear, she could kill that little wretch right now! Rozarr closed the door behind her and she sneaked over to Natasha's bed. Natasha was still breathing evenly and still sleeping away. She really was on the road to recovery, but not for long for Rozarr was about to finish her off. Rozarr knelt down by Natasha's side and she purred at her.

"Hello Natasha." she said in a sly voice "I'm here to finish what I've started. I was the one who fired that rocket at you and nearly hit you. But I failed so now I've come to give you something that'll ensure you STAY dead…"

She then reached onto her tunic around her waist and pulled out a huge syringe with a long wicked needle. The syringe had a purpley-blue liquid inside it. It was a deadly toxin created by the Martians to kill vegetation and plant life on peace loving worlds for they hated plants and vegetation. They were symbols of peace after all. They had used it to wipe out much of the plant life on Greengate which explains why it's a barren wasteland. The toxin was called "Toxic Marsroth" and was so-called in honour of the Martian who invented

it, Dr. Marsroth. He was a late scientist who invented the toxin to do exactly what it does do and as well as plants, it could kill a Martian easily so Natasha was dead once Rozarr injected the killer toxin into her bloodstream. Rozarr aimed the needle above Natasha's chest, most noticeably the heart side of the chest.

"I'll inject this into your heart just to make it more painful." she purred "You deserve a painful death for taking my Diablo from me."

She then aimed the needle and was about to prick it into Natasha's chest until suddenly, a huge hand grabbed her arm and yanked her away, throwing the syringe across the room where it shattered to pieces and spilled the toxin all over the floor. Rozarr screamed in terror and she was soon face-to-face with the grabber. It was a very suspicious and very angry looking Dranzer! He was just passing by the medical room and wasn't pleased to see Rozarr in there holding a syringe above Natasha's chest so he wondered what was going on. Therefore he'd seized Rozarr and was now glaring at her.

"Everything…OK here?" he said coldly, his voice low and rumbling like an earthquake.

Rozarr panted for breath, her heart thumping like a pneumatic drill against her chest, and gazed at Dranzer. Her brain whirled for a lie she could tell to save herself from being found out.

"Uh…just…checking on the patient…to make sure she's alright." lied Rozarr, stumbling over her words in fright.

Dranzer stood up very straight and lifted Rozarr off the floor by her arm. He glared into her eyes, the messenger woman shivering fearfully.

"Get. out. of. here." snarled Dranzer, spitting the words out one at a time.

"Y-y-y-yes s-s-sir, so s-s-sorry sir, I'm g-g-gone s-s-sir." stammered Rozarr.

Dranzer let Rozarr go and the caught messenger woman fled for it quickly. Dranzer watched her leave the room and he thought to

himself.

"Why was she holding a syringe over Natasha's chest?" he mused to himself, his voice rumbling around the room.

He then spotted the syringe that Rozarr had had in her hand and he strode over to it to examine its spilt contents. He got down on his knees and looked at the purpley-blue liquid that had spilt from the broken syringe. He dipped his claw in it and he sniffed the liquid. His eyes widened at the familiar scent that drifted up his nostrils.

"Toxic Marsroth!" he gasped "Why would Rozarr be trying to inject this into Natasha? I have a feeling that she's trying to kill Natasha. Well she does resent her for marrying Diablo first. I have to warn somebody. But my cousin won't believe me." muttered Dranzer grimly "He won't believe his own messenger woman is trying to kill his wife. But I bet Zarondight will believe me. I'll go and tell him what Rozarr's been up to…"

With that said, he wiped the toxin off his claw and he left the medical room. As he left, Rozarr watched him go and she fumed to herself.

"Damn it! I got caught and I bet Dranzer suspects that I'm trying to murder Natasha!" she moaned "I'll have to retreat back into my quarters to make myself look innocent and make Dranzer look like a liar! As for my next strike, I'll wait until the Martians go to storm the Seedrian palace before I try to kill Natasha. Nobody will catch me then…"

Now she had a back-up plan, Rozarr sneaked off back to her quarters so that she could make it look like Dranzer's lying and that she's completely innocent. But such acts wouldn't convince Zarondight since Dranzer was going to him and Zarondight would likely be left onboard the ship to keep watch. Rozarr wouldn't be in the clear even with the Martians going off to storm the palace…

Meanwhile in the dungeons, Sycranna and Zarondight had fastened the terrified Galaxina to a bed with straps around her wrists and ankles. Galaxina struggled in her bonds. She was very frightened.

What were they going to do to her now? They'd already tortured her brutally with the electro-clamp, what else could they do to her? They had mentioned a "Visual Mind-Reader Link" and that probably meant they were going to read her mind. Read her mind…and find out the whereabouts of Greengate's twin planet! Galaxina struggled desperately but it was no use. Her bonds were very secure, she was going nowhere and fast. Sycranna snickered at her pitiful struggling.

"I wouldn't advise on that my child." he taunted "You'll just tire yourself out."

"Ugh, nggh, let me go!" cried Galaxina "You're not reading my mind and finding out what you want!"

"And who may I ask will be saying that to us?" sneered Sycranna "There's nothing you can do to stop us. We're going to proceed with the mind-reading and we're going to find out what we want, aren't we Zarondight?"

Zarondight nodded and made a gleeful expression with his eyes, the expression that kind of suggested he was going to enjoy this dearly.

"Now the victim is secure, we may begin with the procedure." announced Sycranna "Zarondight, you may attach the helmet."

Zarondight nodded and he grabbed a funny looking helmet that had a long, stretching wire connected to a large computer screen in the wall. This was the Visual Mind-Reader Link. The helmet reads the person's thought process and projects the memories onto the screen, giving the user visual contact of the person's sub-conscious mind, thoughts and memories. This ingenious device was invented by a late professor named Professor Korark and it was often used during interrogations. If a Martian was accused of doing something bad, they would be fastened to the device and the truth would be seen on the visual screen. No lie would ever get past the Martians on THIS ship! And there was no way of tricking the device either for once the helmet was put on, the victim was knocked out, preventing them from thinking something else to trick the Martians and the device fed off of past memories and thoughts stored in the person's brain. As Zarondight neared Galaxina with the sinister helmet, Galaxina struggled ever so furiously. She struggled so much you'd

swear she was turning into a jitterbug all of the sudden.

"No, no, no, NO! Please, oh please, don't put that thing on me! DON'T PUT THAT THING ON ME!" screamed Galaxina "HELP, HELP, HELP!"

Zarondight ignored her and put the helmet on Galaxina's head. Galaxina screamed as she was zapped in the cranium by the helmet and she was knocked out cold by it. Galaxina now lay on the bed, completely unconscious and with the mind-reader helmet perched firmly on her head. Sycranna cackled sadistically at her and Zarondight switched on the Visual Mind-Reader Link screen. The screen fuzzed a little as it was booting up. Sycranna looked away from the unconscious Galaxina and he wandered over to the screen.

"Now then, let's see what secrets are locked away in that treasure chest of hers…" purred Sycranna.

He watched the screen as it lit up and showed them a vision of something. To Sycranna's disappointment though, it was a vision of what had just happened only from Galaxina's point of view. This was not what they were searching for at all.

"This isn't what we want, this is just recapping what just happened!" growled Sycranna "Zarondight, rewind this and see if you can find anything in her mind remotely resembling the day of evacuation!"

Zarondight nodded and he pressed a few buttons on the control pad to the Visual Mind-Reader Link screen. He rewound back a few memories of Galaxina's and paid close attention to the rewinding footage on screen. He was looking for anything that resembled the day the Seedrian children evacuated Greengate and moved onto wherever they'd evacuated to. Zarondight was rewinding quite a lot of footage considering the evacuation had been last year so Sycranna had to put up with the agony of waiting until Zarondight found the footage. After a couple of minutes, Zarondight finally found something. He'd gone back to the day Galaxina had been placed in a Seedrian Evacuation Ship. He stopped rewinding it and he played the footage. Sycranna bent over Zarondight's shoulder and he watched the footage with him. They were seeing that fateful day through the eyes of Galaxina and she was looking up at Earthia's

tearful face. Her words emitted through the speakers on the screen.

"It's time for you and your friends to go…my daughter…sob…" sobbed Earthia "You take good care of…sniff…your sisters when you get to the evacuation area. I promise you Galaxina, I promise all your sisters…that we'll beat those Martians and you can come back home."

"I know you will mother." came Galaxina's voice "I love you. And tell daddy I love him too."

"I love you too Galaxina." sobbed Earthia, hugging her daughter "And I hope that you and your sisters will be safe and happy once you get to the evacuation area."

"Why can't you tell me where we're going?" asked Galaxina in wonder "Why do you keep saying "evacuation area"?

"In case anyone's listening to us or spying on us." whispered Earthia "Well then…goodbye Galaxina and…may you come back to us soon…"

Her voice trailed off as the cockpit window to the ship closed around Galaxina. Sycranna screwed his face up in disgust.

"Ugh…that was as revolting as I imagined the whole farewell scenario being!" gagged Sycranna "I never want to watch that again!"

Zarondight rewound it a bit and played the part where Earthia told Galaxina why she kept saying "evacuation area" instead of where they were going again. He put it on repeat for a while and then stopped. Sycranna was not pleased to hear Earthia say that at all. He was secretly impressed by how clever she'd been that day though.

"Earthia is clearly more intelligent then we give her credit for." muttered Sycranna "She kept their intended destination a secret, even from her own children before they evacuated just because she feared anyone spying on her. Clever witch I must say. No matter, we'll find out anyway for we're about to watch the arrival. Zarondight,

try and find the day Galaxina arrives at the evacuation point!"

Zarondight nodded and he fast-forward the footage until they reached the day Galaxina and the children arrived at the Seedrian twin-planet, the very place they had all been evacuated to. All their ships had been set to auto-pilot so the ships took them there all by themselves, preventing anyone from changing course and flying back home. Zarondight played the footage and watched intently as Galaxina's ship neared the twin-planet. But before the planet could come into a fully clear view, something went wrong and the Visual Mind-Reader screen switched off. Sycranna's eyes widened in horror. His chance at finding out what he wanted was being foiled! Why had the screen turned off and what was going on?! Sycranna grabbed Zarondight furiously.

"Zarondight! Why has the screen shut off?!" demanded Sycranna.

Zarondight shrugged his shoulders. He had no idea what was going on. Sycranna's face contorted with rage.

"Well don't just stand there and look stupid! Fix it!" he snarled.

Zarondight obeyed and he bent down to see to the Visual-Mind Reader Link screen. Zarondight opened the casing and he looked inside. To his disappointment, there was a fried wire sparking away like mad. It seemed as if they had fried a circuit and blown a fuse. Strange though considering they rarely used it so it shouldn't have this kind of problem. Zarondight reached in and grabbed the wire but he got zapped by it and the wire suddenly sparked and set fire to the inner circuitry of the Visual Mind-Reader Link screen. Zarondight quickly patted on the fire to put it out. Sycranna could tell that something was wrong from the way Zarondight was acting.

"I take it that the circuitry isn't in good shape Zarondight?" asked Sycranna.

Zarondight took his head out of the inner workings and he nodded grimly. Sycranna instantly flipped and started raging at the top of his voice.

"I COME CLOSE TO FINDING OUT WHERE THE SEEDRIAN

CHILDREN ARE LOCATED AND THE VISUAL MIND-READER LINK MALFUNCTIONS ON ME?!" he thundered "OH TYRAHKO, WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO ME?! I'M NEVER GETTING THAT PROMOTION NOW!"

"What is going on in here?!" bellowed a deep voice.

Sycranna yelped in surprise and he turned around to see none other than Diablo standing there in the dungeon doorway. He was just passing by and he had heard Sycranna ranting his head off so he let himself into the dungeon to see what was wrong. TO his surprise, he saw Sycranna and Zarondight with Galaxina strapped to the visual mind-reader link in the dungeon.

"Oh Diablo, eh heh, heh!" gasped Sycranna "You're just in time to see something!"

"I hope there's a good explanation for this." muttered Diablo "How is Galaxina right here on that bed over there and what are you doing to her?"

"Galaxina took the liberty of returning to her home soil because she was worried about her "pwecious wittle pawents"." explained Sycranna "So I took the liberty of kidnapping her and torturing her for information on the whereabouts of the Seedrian children. She refused to talk though so I came up with the brilliant idea of using the Visual Mind-Reader Link on her to find out where the Seedrian children have been evacuated to. How brilliant is that Diablo? I would have found out though if this stupid machine didn't malfunction on me!" he grumbled, kicking the broken Visual Mind-Reader Link furiously.

Diablo took in all of this and he was amazed that of all people to come up with a plan so brilliant, Sycranna, his Grand Pilot, had come up with it. Guess he should have taken Sycranna's intelligence for granted. Maybe he DID deserve a higher rank after all. Such intelligence deserves a promotion. Diablo smiled at Sycranna and he put a hand on his Grand Pilot's shoulder.

"Sycranna…that was one of the best things I've ever seen a Martian attempt." congratulated Diablo "Pity it failed thanks to faulty

machinery but still, intelligence like that deserves a reward."

Sycranna's stomach tingled with excitement.

"So…does this mean…?" he said, getting ready to cheer.

"Yes Sycranna, I am giving you your much desired promotion at long last." said Diablo happily "You are now promoted from Grand Pilot to Squadron Leader but you still maintain your pilot status. Is that what you wanted?"

"It's EVERYTHING I wanted Lord Diablo!" shrieked Sycranna excitedly "Oh thank Tyrahko! Diablo, I cannot thank you enough for your generosity!"

"OK, OK, calm down Sycranna." laughed Diablo "And besides, you're about to get your first time in your new rank for we're storming the Seedrian Palace in a couple of minutes. And seeing Galaxina here has given me a change of plans…"

He then reached over and un-strapped Galaxina from the Visual Mind-Reader Link. The moment Galaxina was removed from the machine, she woke up and gasped for breath.

"Huh…where am I? What in the…?" she cried out in surprise.

"Uh…Diablo?" asked a puzzled Sycranna.

"Instead of storming the palace, we'll set an ambush." explained Diablo "And this filthy Seedrian will make the perfect bait to bring Dark Oak out into the open to save his precious daughter. The moment he steps out though, we'll all strike and bring the palace down!"

Galaxina gasped in horror at the sound of that.

"A meritorious idea sir but…will Dark Oak fall for it?" asked Sycranna "I mean, won't it look like an obvious trap to him?"

"Seedrians care too much about their repulsive half forms." sneered Diablo "Dark Oak won't be able to resist the urge to save his stupid daughter."

"I'm not stupid!" snapped Galaxina "I'm one of the most highly educated Seedrians ever born for your information…"

"SHUT UP!" bellowed Diablo, his voice so powerful that Galaxina's eardrums almost burst (wait a minute…she doesn't HAVE ears!).

"Anyway, Dark Oak will buy it." crooned Diablo "His heart will take over his head when he sees Galaxina in my hands."

"Let's hope that works sir." said Sycranna doubtfully "But if we lose her…we can't use her to find out where the children have been evacuated once the Visual Mind-Reader Link is finished."

"We won't lose her." assured Diablo "The ambush will be a success and we'll defeat the Seedrians. Then we'll take Galaxina back and use the Visual Mind-Reader Link on her once it's fixed. And then we can found out where the Seedrian offspring are hiding. Get yourself ready Sycranna for we're about to depart for battle. Oh and by the way, since you probably don't know what's happened, I'm sorry to say that Natasha won't be joining us. She's bed bound at the moment."

Zarondight looked like he was going to faint at the sound of that. He was VERY loyal to his sister Natasha and just the fact she was bed bound shocked him almost to death. Sycranna looked like he couldn't believe his ears.

"Natasha's…" he stammered "What happened to her?!"

"A Seedrian almost hit her with a rocket. It missed but the force of the explosion knocked her out." said Diablo grimly "But she's fine, don't worry. With any luck, she'll wake up by the time we come back."

"I hope she recovers swiftly." said Sycranna "Especially for Zarondight's sake…" he looked over at the shaken and visibly horrified Zarondight.

"Zarondight, Natasha will be fine, don't you worry." assured Diablo "When she wakes up, you may see her and you can express your concerns for her. Understood?"

Zarondight nodded and he relaxed his expressions.

"Good." said Diablo "We'll see you later Zarondight. You can take charge of the ship while we're away. And fix the Visual Mind-Reader Link while you're at it please."

Zarondight nodded and waved goodbye to Diablo. Diablo and Sycranna walked out of the dungeon with Galaxina tucked firmly under Diablo's arm. As the two walked away from the dungeon, Dranzer arrived and watched as Diablo and Sycranna walked away. Dranzer then slipped into the dungeon and spotted Zarondight fixing up the Visual Mind-Reader Link. Zarondight looked up and his eyes widened at the sight of Dranzer. Dranzer wandered up to Zarondight and put his arm around his shoulder.

"Zarondight, there's something you must hear…" he said to the silent Martian quietly.

Zarondight listened closely as Dranzer prepared to tell him his suspicions about Rozarr…

Meanwhile, all the Martians had gathered into the war room and were lining up ready for a role call. Marik, Silas, Sierra, Obelisk, Myra and Mercury were all here and ready to go. Dranzer and Count Nyder were missing though. We already know where Dranzer is but Count Nyder's whereabouts were unknown to anyone. Rozarr was here and counting heads for Diablo so she could report to him. She was a bit worried about he fact Dranzer wasn't here but she couldn't for the life of her think why Count Nyder wasn't here. Where was that Count Drago replacement? Was Dranzer talking to him about her? Or was he doing something? Nevertheless, her beloved Diablo would sort that out easily. She was hopefully going to still be in the clear yet.

"So Martians, are you all armed and ready for the storming of the Seedrian Palace then?" asked Rozarr.

"Yes." said the Martians.

"Good, you'd better be since this attack on the palace is likely going to be very big." sniffed Rozarr, flicking her headwear around in an uppity manner.

"As if you know anything misery-guts." muttered Mercury, folding her arms "You've only JUST heard about our next step in this war so you can't say much about it."

"I'll thank you for keeping your ignorance to yourself Mercury." sniffed Rozarr "I didn't ask for your opinion."

"Shut up you pompous old hag!" snapped Mercury "You maybe the messenger woman but that doesn't give you the right to talk down to us like that! Our ranks are higher then yours so you have no right to act so high and mighty to us!"

"I'm a messenger FOR Diablo." retorted Rozarr "Therefore, I'm technically high and mighty so I can act like that if I like."

"Well let's see how "high and mighty" you act when I drive an arrow through your heart!" snarled Mercury.

"I'd like to see you try you ugly old asteroid!" dared Rozarr

"Stop arguing both of you!" bellowed Obelisk "Diablo will not tolerate behaviour like this from you two!"

"Yeah Mercury!" snickered Rozarr, sticking out her tongue.

"He meant both of us you twit!" snapped Mercury.

"If you don't stop right now I'll hammer you both into the floor!" shouted Myra, raising her magnetism hammer menacingly.

Mercury and Rozarr stopped arguing and Mercury stood back to attention whereas Rozarr just folded her arms and scowled at Mercury. Myra lowered her hammer and stood to attention.

"Thank you Myra." said Obelisk "Now stand to attention, I think Diablo is coming."

The sound of heavy footsteps clunking rang from up the corridor

leading to the war room. The Martians all recognized those footsteps. They were undeniably the footsteps of Diablo since his footsteps were always rather heavy sounding. But it wasn't just Diablo coming as we all know, Diablo was coming to the war room with Sycranna behind him. Diablo strode in a prideful manner into the war room with Sycranna behind, looking very pleased with himself (he's just been promoted, what do you expect?). Rozarr bowed down to Diablo.

"Lord Diablo, I'm ready to report to you." said Rozarr.

"Go on then, let's hear it." said Diablo casually.

"All the Martians are armed and ready." said Rozarr "But Dranzer and Nyder are missing."

"Nyder said he wanted to opt out of this battle." explained Marik "He's making some new weapons for us or so he says."

"Very well, I'll respect his wishes and allow him to miss this battle." said Diablo "But what about Dranzer? Where is…"

"I'm right here cousin." came a voice that he was hoping to hear.

It was Dranzer. He'd finished talking to Zarondight and he quickly found out that he was late for the meeting so he'd run off to the war room quickly to make sure nobody started looking for him. Dranzer strode into the war room and took his place beside Obelisk in the line. Obelisk looked at his twin brother.

"Where were you Dranzer?" asked Obelisk.

"I…had to take care of something privately." lied Dranzer "It's OK now though, don't fuss."

"OK then." said Obelisk, not entirely sure he believed Dranzer, he suspected something was going down and he had something to do with it.

Now the Martians were all here, Diablo stood before them and he put his hands behind his back.

"I have a couple of announcements to make before we begin our assault." boomed Diablo "First of, there's been a change of plan. Sycranna, show them the prisoner."

Sycranna obeyed and he emerged from behind Diablo, holding a bound and gagged Galaxina in his hands. Galaxina mumbled furiously behind the clamp that was wrapped around her mouth, preventing her from speaking. The Martians all gasped in surprise at the mere sight of Galaxina. They all began conversing to one another immediately.

"Sweet merciful moon rocks! It's Galaxina!" cried Myra

"How in the name of the solar system did SHE get here?!" exclaimed Mercury "She was evacuated along with the other children!"

"What is that filth doing here anyway?!" demanded Obelisk.

"She must be terminated!" growled Dranzer, whipping out his hand held laser cannon and pointing it at Galaxina "Allow me the honours cousin!"

"At ease everyone!" thundered Diablo "I can explain everything!"

The Martians all calmed down and Dranzer put away his cannon. He hated it when he whipped it out only to put it away again. Now the tension had simmered, Diablo spoke and announced what was going on.

"Sycranna here tells me that Galaxina came back because she was worried about her parents." explained Diablo "I guess she flew back here in one of those Seedrian Evacuation Ships the children were evacuated in."

"She did indeed master." confirmed Sycranna "Her ship is parked out there in the plains somewhere."

"Thank you Sycranna." said Diablo "So anyway, we're going to use Galaxina as bait to draw out Dark Oak and his men. I will be there alone with Galaxina while the rest of you wait out of sight. When Dark Oak and his men come out to rescue Galaxina…we'll have

them!"

"That sounds like it's going to be a good idea dad." said Marik "After all, Seedrians are automatically programmed to help anyone in danger without a second thought. And that is how we managed to kill so many of them before…" he added, smilingly deviously at the memories he had of killing off Seedrians who couldn't resist the urge to save their loved ones despite it being an obvious trap.

"Precisely." said Diablo "The plan will be our ticket to victory. And now the second announcement:"

He urged Sycranna to stand forward to which the newly promoted Martian did without hesitation. He had a very smug expression on his face.

"Sycranna, as you all know has done the amazing task of killing Red Pine, one of the most powerful soldiers in the Seedrian ranks." announced Diablo "But today, he's done something even more amazing."

"What's that then sir?" asked Obelisk.

Sycranna took over.

"I spotted Galaxina's ship so I came up with the brilliant idea of kidnapping her and using the Visual Mind-Reader Link on her to find out where the children have been evacuated to." explained Sycranna "The machine unfortunately malfunctioned so I was unable to find out what I wanted but Zarondight's fixing it and once we return back here with Galaxina, we'll use it on her again and find out what we want to find out."

The Martians murmured among each other.

"So because of the fact he's done two amazing acts in one day, I have given him a promotion." continued Diablo "He is now a Squadron Leader along with Dranzer, Obelisk and Mercury. So he'll be joining us in our attack on the Seedrian palace. May he have a round of applause soldiers?"

The Martians all started clapping for Sycranna. The newly promoted

Martian just bowed and smiled happily and smugly as they cheered him.

"Well done Sycranna!" cheered Mercury.

"You've honoured us all today." congratulated Dranzer.

"You've earned your place at a new table Sycranna." said Obelisk.

"You'll make a fine addition to the Squadron Leaders!" cheered Myra.

"Our battle's about to become easier for us!" cried Marik happily.

"Our army's gonna be better now you're a Squadron leader!" cheered Silas.

"Hooray for Sycranna!" hollered Sierra.

Even Rozarr clapped…sarcastically of course for she didn't really care about all that. Big deal is what she thought it was. She was pretty hard to impress what with being a misery-guts unless around Diablo. Sycranna just bowed and smiled as if he was being presented with an award.

"Thank you, thank you. You're too kind all of you." crowed Sycranna "I look forward to my first battle under my new rank."

"You'll need a weapon though Sycranna, you can't go out into battle without a weapon." noted Diablo.

"Don't worry, I already made myself one." said Sycranna.

He then reached behind his back and unsheathed a long, sharp rapier with a thicker blade then a human rapier. The hilt was very fancy looking and the steel used to make the blade looked very tough. Diablo looked at it in amazement. Where did Sycranna get that rapier? He didn't remember having it in the armoury before. Sycranna gave the rapier a few twirls.

"I built this thing myself." explained Sycranna "Built it behind your backs while you all fought away. I'm a swords person after all so I

felt it would be fitting that I built my own sword. Nice isn't it?"

"It's very nice Sycranna." said Marik with a smile on his face "And you built it yourself no less, that makes it more special."

"It does indeed doesn't it Marik?" purred Sycranna, sheathing his sword.

"So then, now all that's out the way, who's ready to storm the Seedrian palace?" boomed Diablo enthusiastically.

"We are!" cheered the Martians.

"Well then, let us go out into battle and put our little ambush plan into action…" said Diablo, flashing a twisted smile at Galaxina, the Seedrian shuddering at him.

With that said, the Martians all wandered off to prepare for the big battle with the Seedrians. As the Martians all left to gear up for this crusade, Marik couldn't help but start asking questions to his siblings.

"It's a real pity that Count Nyder's going to miss all of this." said Marik "But why would he miss out on the opportunity to destroy the Seedrians just so he can make more weapons?"

"I dunno, maybe Nyder thinks he can build something that can help us win at last." suggested Silas "Bet he'll feel stupid when we all return and the Seedrians are defeated and thus, his new weapons will be obsolete."

"Not necessarily Silas, they could be put to use in our battle with those Mobian thingies that we're targeting next." noted Sierra "How I wanna rip their guts out for killing Uncle Drago and crippling our brother's hand!"

"Oh don't worry about Marik's sodding hand, he's fine." scoffed Silas "It's Uncle Drago we should be more concerned about, he's dead for Tyrahko's sake!"

"I know but I wanna avenge Marik as well as Uncle Drago." said Sierra.

"And I appreciate that my lovely sister." said Marik appreciatively (hey, Marik maybe a sadistic little tyrant but he's not ungrateful to his family!) "But we'll worry about those blasted Mobians later, we've got this war to finish first."

"And with Galaxina as bait to drive out Dark Oak and his men, this war will be as good as finished." bragged Silas "And I'll make sure that I'm the one that kills Dark Oak too since I deserve such an honour…"

Marik and Sierra ignored him and instead, talked to each other.

"It is a pity Nyder will miss this, he would love to see all the carnage we're going to bring to the Seedrians." said Marik.

"He's with us in spirit big bro." said Sierra "And I'm sure he'll love to hear the good news when we come back."

Marik nodded and the children continued down the corridor after the others. This battle was going to be one of the biggest battles in the entire war once the plan was put into action. And almost every Martian would be taking part. As the Martians prepared for battle though, Rozarr sneaked off to finish off Natasha once and for all. She sneaked off to the armoury and grabbed a large sword that was in there. The sword had a big bulky blade and three prongs around the hand guard.

"I'm taking no chances now, I've got the best opportunity ever to kill that wretch Natasha." said Rozarr "I'll chop her to pieces with this and in order to hide myself, I think I'll frame Zarondight for the crime. I'll make it look like he did it. I'll hide the sword in his room and make sure there's plenty of Natasha's blood on the blade. And to make it more convincing, I'll hide the corpse in his room too…"

As she started talking to herself, she wandered off down to the medical room with the sword in hand. To her misfortune though, Zarondight was watching her from the shadows and listening intently to her. He had been shocked to hear what Dranzer had told him and he decided to spy on her just to make sure Dranzer's suspicions were correct. Now they had been confirmed to be correct, Zarondight was going to stop Rozarr dead in her tracks. And he had

been recording what she'd said to herself so Rozarr wouldn't be able to lie her way out of this one to Diablo. Rozarr was dead meat once Zarondight caught her…

As for Count Nyder, he was not building new weapons like he had said to Marik. He was instead outside of the ship, about one-hundred yards away and in the middle of a great, stretching wasteland, piloting a drilling vehicle. The vehicle was large with a large drill sticking out the front of it and it had tank treads for motion. Nyder was using the machine to drill down to the planet's core and the machine had his bomb strapped to it. Nyder had a device that showed him where the planet's core was so he'd know when to stop the drill. As the drill began to dig away into the earth, Nyder muttered to himself.

"We're fighting a losing battle." he muttered "And there is no way in hell that I am going to be content with being defeated by a bunch of plant creatures! I don't care what Diablo says, I want the Martians to win this godforsaken war and I am going to go ahead with my plan in order to help us win it! Blowing up the planet isn't cowardice at all, it is a brilliant plan and the best chance at winning! Diablo will appreciate me once I set this thing to blow and end this war forever…"

He smiled deviously to himself as the machine dug down into the earth and disappeared from sight. The end of the world was coming for Greengate and it seemed that nobody would be able to stop it. The Martians would flee the planet and make the Seedrians think they were surrendering and then…KA-BOOM! It'll be lights out for Greengate…

As for the Martians, they had just arrived at the Seedrian palace. The majestic palace that is the residence of Earthia and Dark Oak still stood proudly above the great wastes that stretched out all around the planet. The Martians had all hidden behind some large rocks that were about fifty feet away from the palace. The rocks were big enough to hide all the Martians and when the time was

right, they'd leap out and start attacking. And once the attack started their back up, which was a load of soldiers and a bunch of tanks, would start coming in and the slaughter would begin. The Martians all waited patiently as Diablo strode towards the palace with the bound and gagged Galaxina in his hands. Galaxina was happy to see her old home again but she wasn't happy at the fact she was arriving back at her old home as a hostage. She hoped that her dad would save her but chances are, he wouldn't since this whole thing was a trap and he was going to fall for it. As Diablo strode towards the palace, some Seedrian soldiers watching from the palace turrets spotted him and they pointed their guns at Diablo.

"Hold it right there Diablo!" they yelled "Put your hands up and surrender yourself!"

Diablo ignored them and instead, hoisted Galaxina up for them to see. The soldiers all thought they were going to have a unison of heart attacks at the mere sight of Galaxina in Diablo's hands. They all lowered their guns and began conversing frantically to themselves

"Holy rosebuds! It's Galaxina!" shrieked one soldier.

"He's got Galaxina!" shouted another.

"How the seeds did Diablo get her?!" cried another.

"The kids were all evacuated! Galaxina shouldn't even be here!" exclaimed another "And the Martians can't possibly know where the kids are!"

"Oy! You lot up there! I hope you're listening because this is VERY important!" boomed Diablo.

The soldiers stopped nattering to one another and they peered back down at Diablo, worried on what he had to say. Diablo smiled evilly at them and he gave his testimony.

"As you can see, I have Galaxina in my hands." announced Diablo "Tell Dark Oak that if he wants to see his precious daughter again… he must come out and claim her himself! I will fight no one but Dark

Oak and his best men for Galaxina! You tell him that! And tell him that if he refuses…I'll snap her neck in two without hesitation!"

He grabbed Galaxina's head and made a threatening gesture as if he was going to snap Galaxina's neck like a twig. Galaxina screamed from behind her gag and began to cry tears of fright. The soldiers immediately obeyed Diablo's order and they ran off to fetch Dark Oak faster than you can say "Daffodil, Daisy, Whoop-dee-do-da." (not that you'd EVER want to say that!). Diablo smiled like a swamp troll to himself. The plan was working! In a moment, the ambush could begin! Oh happy day! Sycranna peeked over the rock he and the others were hiding behind and he reported to them.

"The plan is in motion and it seems to be working." said Sycranna "The soldiers have gone to do as Diablo's asked."

"Of course they have, Seedrians have no choice but to save a child in distress." snorted Marik "Once a child's in distress, all common sense drops and they just rush into save it without second thought. That is their ultimate weakness. I guess that's why they evacuated the children in the first place."

"So we couldn't endanger them and use their weakness against them." muttered Silas "Pity really, I'd love to have stomped on a kid or two."

"Well once we find out where the Seedrian children have been evacuated, you'll get to do that brother." said Sierra.

Silas smiled at the thought of killing a thousand Seedrian children. As for Diablo, he stood there waiting patiently for Dark Oak to arrive. After a couple of minutes, Dark Oak, Pale Bay Leaf, Black Narcissus and Yellow Zelkova all came out of the palace and strode up to Diablo, ready to smash him to pieces. Dark Oak already had his sword in his hand. Galaxina tried to warn Dark Oak of the trap but given her gag, she couldn't. Dark Oak pointed his sword at Diablo.

"You monster! Release my daughter immediately or I shall have to run you through Diablo!" snarled Dark Oak "And do not attempt to resist, you cannot stop all four of us at once. Even you're not that powerful."

"I said you had to fight me for her you numbskull so by all means, fight me for her!" snapped Diablo, throwing Galaxina aside and drawing out his mace.

"So be it. You've just arranged your own funeral Diablo." said Dark Oak coldly "Zelkova, Narcissus, you take the sides, me and Bay Leaf will take him head on."

Yellow Zelkova and Black Narcissus did as they were told and they surrounded Diablo from the sides. Narcissus had his mirror staff ready (the mirror's fixed by the way) and Zelkova clenched his fists. Bay Leaf had his swords in hand and Dark Oak was ready to strike. But before anybody could move, Diablo bellowed aloud.

"NOW MARTIANS!"

And with that said, all the Martians jumped out of their hiding place and they charged towards the Seedrians. Dark Oak almost dropped his sword in horror.

"It's an ambush!" he cried "We've been tricked…"

Diablo just promptly uppercut Dark Oak into the air with his mace. He hurtled into the air and came down with a heavy clunk at the foot of the palace doors. The Seedrians all braced themselves as the Martians charged towards them and drew out their weapons. The battle for the palace was on! And the winner was certain to be the Martians for they were well prepared and the Seedrians weren't! But Dark Oak wasn't going to let Diablo and his men win that easily. He was going to rescue Galaxina and stop the Martians from storming his palace…

This is it! The final battle is beginning! Who's gonna win this one? Who will emerge victorious? And who will bite the dust? Tune in next time as the final part of The Final Frontier begins...

So Arena Lumanati and Kratos Pwns how's this arc looking so far?

And fellow readers, can you please give more feedback on this

story? I feel as if it's not being appreciated enough...

The Final Frontier 4

Arc 16: The Final Frontier

The Martian Invasion Prologue

Takes place during Stories 120-125 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Ever since the Seedrians had fallen back to the Seedrian palace after their failed attempt to destroy the Martian ship, things had been pretty quiet for them. They'd been recuperating from the battle and now they'd all rested, they'd started preparing for the storming of the Martian ship while the Martians had been preparing to storm their palace. Yeah, imagine that, they were attempting to storm each other. But the Martians had beaten them to it. Diablo had arrived at the Seedrian palace with a captive Galaxina in his hands. The Seedrian soldiers standing on guard in the palace turrets saw Diablo coming towards the palace, seemingly unarmed and unaided. They began wondering why would Diablo dare come to them unarmed and unaided but they didn't care; this was their golden moment to kill or capture the Martian leader. They all pointed their guns at Diablo.

"Hold it right there Diablo!" they yelled "Put your hands up and surrender yourself!"

Diablo ignored them and instead, hoisted Galaxina up for them to see. The soldiers all thought they were going to have a unison of heart attacks at the mere sight of Galaxina in Diablo's hands. They all lowered their guns and began conversing frantically to themselves

"Holy rosebuds! It's Galaxina!" shrieked one soldier.

"He's got Galaxina!" shouted another.

"How the seeds did Diablo get her?!" cried another.

"The kids were all evacuated! Galaxina shouldn't even be here!"

exclaimed another "And the Martians can't possibly know where the kids are!"

"Oy! You lot up there! I hope you're listening because this is VERY important!" boomed Diablo.

The soldiers stopped nattering to one another and they peered back down at Diablo, worried on what he had to say. Diablo smiled evilly at them and he gave his testimony.

"As you can see, I have Galaxina in my hands." announced Diablo "Tell Dark Oak that if he wants to see his precious daughter again… he must come out and claim her himself! I will fight no one but Dark Oak and his best men for Galaxina! You tell him that! And tell him that if he refuses…I'll snap her neck in two without hesitation!"

He grabbed Galaxina's head and made a threatening gesture as if he was going to snap Galaxina's neck like a twig. Galaxina screamed from behind her gag and began to cry tears of fright. The soldiers immediately obeyed Diablo's order and they ran off to fetch Dark Oak faster than you can say "Daffodil, Daisy, Whoop-dee-do-da." (not that you'd EVER want to say that!). Diablo smiled like a swamp troll to himself. The plan was working! In a moment, the ambush could begin! Oh happy day! Sycranna peeked over the rock he and the others were hiding behind and he reported to them.

"The plan is in motion and it seems to be working." said Sycranna "The soldiers have gone to do as Diablo's asked."

"Of course they have, Seedrians have no choice but to save a child in distress." snorted Marik "Once a child's in distress, all common sense drops and they just rush into save it without second thought. That is their ultimate weakness. I guess that's why they evacuated the children in the first place."

"So we couldn't endanger them and use their weakness against them." muttered Silas "Pity really, I'd love to have stomped on a kid or two."

"Well once we find out where the Seedrian children have been evacuated, you'll get to do that brother." said Sierra.

Silas smiled at the thought of killing a thousand Seedrian children. As for Diablo, he stood there waiting patiently for Dark Oak to arrive. Inside the palace, the Seedrian soldiers were stacking up crates of bombs and placing them inside a convoy truck that would be used to take the bombs to the Martians. The convoy truck was boxed shaped and curved around the top areas. Only two people could sit in it, the driver and a passenger. The truck hovered above the ground too and could store a lot of weapons in the back. Many of these trucks had been used by the Seedrians and they were very useful. And now it was going to continue to be useful for it was going to transport the bombs to the Martian ship. Dark Oak watched gleefully as the truck was loaded.

"Excellent work men." said Dark Oak "This whole supply of bombs we have will easily destroy the Martian ship and bring this war to an end. Be ready to roll out in five minutes."

The soldiers all nodded and they finished loading the last of the supplies. As they prepared for action, Earthia put her arm around Dark Oak.

"Lucas, do you really think that this is necessary?" asked Earthia "Taking every bomb we have in the armoury and going over to the Martian ship to destroy it with all those bombs? If we kill them all like this…that makes us no better than those disgusting Martians."

"Earthia my dear, I am fully aware of that." said Dark Oak, taking off his helmet so Earthia could see his handsome face again "But in warfare, you have to do what it takes to ensure your survival. This is the best opportunity we have of bringing peace back to Greengate and putting an end to all this pointless bloodshed we've had over the years. And I'm willing to take it. Once all the Martians are dead…we can finally return to our normal ways."

"I'm all in for bringing an end to the war Lucas dear but…I don't think I could live…live with the thought that we've gone against our way of life…" stammered Earthia, looking at her trembling hands "And we'll have to live with this forever…live with blood…upon our hands…I don't think I could live with that!"

She came close to breaking down. Dark Oak put his hands on his

wife's shoulders and looked her in the eyes.

"Earthia, we have no other choice. If we're to win the war, we HAVE to do this." said Dark Oak sternly "The Martians won't surrender and they won't give up. We have to commence with our plan or face extinction at their hands. They started all this so we're going to end it."

"I know Lucas…" said Earthia, putting her hands on Dark Oak's shoulders "It's just going to be hard to get over the fact we've abandoned our peaceful ways…and committed genocide."

"I don't think every Martian in existence is here on Greengate Earthia so we're not committing Genocide." noted Dark Oak "We're just stopping one whole ship full of Martians. There's probably more out there and they'll hopefully not come across us. So don't worry about genocide Earthia, we're far from that in this war."

"You're right Lucas…" said Earthia "It'll still be hard to except that we've had to do such a method to win this war…"

Then suddenly the soldiers that were up in the palace turrets burst into the room frantically.

"Your eminence!" shrieked one soldier "We've got trouble!"

"Diablo's outside the palace! And he's got Galaxina hostage!" exclaimed another.

The look on Earthia's face was legendary. She was so shocked at this that she felt like she was going to just drop dead for no reason whatsoever. Dark Oak however was furious and he clenched his fists in rage.

"Diablo's got…WHO?!" he screamed.

"Galaxina!" repeated the soldier "We don't know how he's got her since she SHOULD be on Bluegate, our twin planet, but somehow, he's got her and demands that you and your best men fight him or he'll kill her!"

"No!" wailed Earthia "Oh god, please no! Not my precious Galaxina!

If we ever retrieve Cosmo from the home planet of that future couple who visited us that time Drago was killed, she'll die of a broken heart when she comes home to find out her eldest sister is dead!"

"She will not die Earthia." assured Dark Oak "For me, Zelkova, Narcissus and Bay Leaf will save her. Galaxina will be back safe in our palace."

"I hope so." said Earthia shakily "Good luck Lucas."

She and Dark Oak then shared a parting kiss before Dark Oak put his helmet back on.

"Yellow Zelkova, Black Narcissus, Pale Bay Leaf, with me now!" he ordered "My eldest daughter is in need of aid!"

The three Seedrian leaders obeyed and they followed Dark Oak, who unsheathed his sword, out through the palace doors. They all ran outside and surely enough, they saw Diablo standing there with a bound and gagged Galaxina in his hands. Dark Oak and his men strode up to Diablo and he pointed his sword at Diablo's face. Galaxina tried to warn them of the trap that had been set up for them but given her gag, she couldn't.

"You monster! Release my daughter immediately or I shall have to run you through Diablo!" snarled Dark Oak "And do not attempt to resist, you cannot stop all four of us at once. Even you're not that powerful."

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"Zelkova, Narcissus, Bay Leaf, fight as hard as you can!" he bellowed "Soldiers, you're needed out here to even our numbers!"

The Seedrian soldiers got the command and they ran out to the even the scores. But they wouldn't be of much help given how easy they were to kill but Dark Oak was outnumbered so he needed every resource he had right now. Yellow Zelkova ran up to Dranzer and Obelisk, his armour taking their shots as they fired their cannons at him and he gave them both an uppercut to the face each. That uppercut sent them flying into the air and back over the rock they had been hiding behind. Dranzer and Obelisk picked themselves up and they ran back out from behind the rock without their weapons in hand. Their weapons were futile against such a powerfully built and armoured Seedrian. Dranzer and Obelisk both punched Yellow Zelkova in the sides of his head and then they both gut punched him together. Dranzer then grabbed Yellow Zelkova's left arm and Obelisk grabbed his right arm. They both tossed him into the air and sent him crashing down on top of a couple of Seedrian soldiers. His heavy weight courtesy of his bulky armour squashed them both flat. Zelkova picked himself up and grumbled as he wiped the corpses off

of himself.

"I've accidentally flattened enough soldiers in this war." he grumbled "This is the last time this'll happen again!"

Dranzer suddenly got the drop on him and he roundhouse punched him directly into the wall. Yellow Zelkova pulled himself out of the wall and he charged towards Dranzer but Obelisk charged into him from the side and rammed him down onto his side.

"Alone we're a threat, together we're unstoppable!" crowed Obelisk "You'll never beat both of us at once Yellow Zelkova!"

"Keep your arrogance in check brother!" snapped Dranzer "We cannot afford to lose focus in this battle!"

"Yes brother." said Obelisk.

True Dranzer was as arrogant as he was but Dranzer was trying to work on his arrogance whereas Obelisk wasn't so Dranzer had to push him back in line now and again. Yellow Zelkova picked himself up and he charged towards the deadly twins again. Dranzer and Obelisk just prepared to deck him one as he charged towards them.

As for Black Narcissus, he was fighting Mercury since he wanted to pay her back for breaking his mirror earlier (which had long since been fixed). This was a nuisance to Mercury since he was now capable of deflecting her arrows again. But Myra was on hand to fix that for her friend. She activated her magnetism hammer and used it to snatch the mirror staff out of Narcissus' hands and bring it straight to her. Narcissus gasped as his mirror staff was snatched straight out of his hands and brought straight to Myra's hammer. Myra then switched the hammer off so the staff was no longer magnetised to her hammer and she picked it up. She smashed the mirror again and broke the staff over her knee. Black Narcissus fumed angrily at Myra.

"Let's see you deflect Mercury's arrows now Black Narcissus!" sneered Myra.

"You'll be eviscerated for that!" growled Black Narcissus.

Mercury just fired an arrow at him but Narcissus dodged the arrow just in time. It hit the ground and exploded, throwing him across the battlefield. Black Narcissus picked himself up and ran over to Myra. Myra raised her hammer and walloped Black Narcissus with it. Black Narcissus was thrown backwards by the hammer but before he could land onto the ground, Myra used the hammer's magnetic abilities to attract Narcissus to it. Narcissus was soon magnetised to the hammer and Myra threw him across the battlefield. Narcissus landed with a heavy thunk on the ground but before Myra could do anything, a Seedrian soldier shot her and she was brought down onto the ground. Mercury shot the soldier with an arrow and helped Myra stand back up.

"You OK?" asked Mercury.

"Fine, it wasn't even painful." said Myra casually, picking her hammer back up "Let's smash those Seedrians!"

"You've got it." said Mercury slyly.

Mercury and Myra charged back into battle as some Seedrian soldiers ran out to fight them off.

Marik, Silas & Sierra were all fighting Pale Bay Leaf at once. Pale Bay Leaf was a powerful warrior but the combined efforts of the three children were enough to have him on the ropes. Marik slashed at him with his metal claws but Pale Bay Leaf took the attack and then slashed at Marik with his swords. Marik leaped back to dodge the attack.

"That metallic hand of yours is impressive Marik, but it will not help you in this match for I am too powerful for you and your disgusting siblings." gloated Pale Bay Leaf.

"Oh yeah?" sneered Marik "Maybe you'll change your tune when I do this to you!"

He then let fly a powerful electrical jolt at Pale Bay Leaf. Pale Bay Leaf was electrocuted by the attack and his armour only made it worse for him since metal conducts electricity. Pale Bay Leaf's armour was a bit like a lightning rod for him. Marik kept up the

electrocution until Pale Bay Leaf eventually passed out and collapsed onto the ground. Sierra was well impressed whereas Silas just scoffed and had a face that clearly said "Show off!" without him having to say the words himself.

"That was amazing Marik!" cried Sierra.

"Thank you Sierra." crowed Marik "And now Bay Leaf's down, let's kill him before he can get back up."

But before Marik and his siblings could do anything of the sort, all three of them were blasted by a trio of Seedrian soldiers. Sierra retaliated by shooting all three of them with her arm-mounted crossbow. Two Seedrian soldiers charged up to Silas but Silas simply cleaved them in two with a simple swipe of the sword. Marik ran over to deal with some more Seedrian soldiers coming in to stop them. While this was happening though, a couple of soldiers dragged Pale Bay Leaf's unconscious body away and back into the palace. The Martian kids were so occupied with fighting the soldiers that they didn't even notice Bay Leaf being taken away.

Dark Oak and Diablo were fighting each other as usual and Sycranna was showing off his lesser seen sword-skills by sword-fighting some sword-wielding Seedrians and fending them off with ease. He plunged his rapier into the heart of one soldier and he cackled gleefully.

"This is why I should have been promoted in the first place!" crowed Sycranna as he killed another soldier.

Two more soldiers charged at Sycranna but Sycranna was ready for them. He sheathed his rapier and he lashed out at the Seedrian soldiers. He grabbed two of them by the heads and slammed them together. Then he drew his rapier out and killed them both. Then he raised his rapier and blocked the blow of an oncoming sword attack from another soldier.

Diablo and Dark Oak clashed weapons with each other and then they crossed weapons at face level.

"You are outnumbered Diablo!" crowed Dark Oak "We will

overpower you eventually and then we will destroy you all!"

"Fat chance of that Oakey Cokey!" sneered Diablo "Especially since I have back-up coming…"

The moment he said that, the sound of oncoming Martian tanks came into view, surprising the Seedrians. Now the fight had started, the Martian's back up could commence and it had finally arrived. There were four Martian tanks all together and a horde of Martian soldiers all marched beside the tanks. The Martian and Seedrian numbers had just become even now. Dark Oak was horrified to see this and he quickly called out into his communicator.

"Attention, attention! The Martians have back up!" he cried "Send in the wheel cannons and more soldiers now! Also raise the barrier to protect the palace!"

That distraction was enough for Diablo to wallop Dark Oak into the air with his mace. After doing that, he then wondered to himself.

"Barrier?" he mused "The Seedrian palace doesn't have a barrier… does it?"

To Diablo's disappointment, it did indeed have a barrier. Black Narcissus had installed some new defences into the Seedrian palace after Count Drago's attack on it that time and the Seedrians had yet to put it into action. Now was the first time the barrier would ever be used in battle for it had only been tested before. From the top of the palace emitted a blue dome shape that surrounded the entire palace, preventing anyone from getting in or out of the palace. All the Seedrian's back-up had exited the palace before the barrier was raised so they had all the men and weapons needed for this battle. Diablo was furious to see that the Seedrian palace had finally decided to get some defences and he roared at his men.

"Bring that barrier down! NO MATTER THE COST!" he thundered.

The Martian soldiers obeyed and they all ran in to fight the Seedrian soldiers while the tanks began firing at the palace barrier. This battle was beginning to get more and more hectic by the second and chances are, a lot of damage was going to be done to ethier side…

Meanwhile, back on the Martian ship, Natasha was just starting to wake up at last from her injuries received on the battlefield in the earlier onslaught. She'd been out for quite a while now but she was finally beginning to wake up. She moaned sleepily as she began to come around. She stretched a good morning stretch and she sat up on the bed, her eyes opening slowly.

"Mmm…oh my…that rocket came…from nowhere…" muttered Natasha "Where…"

Her eyes fully opened and she blinked the sleep out of them. Her vision cleared up and she looked around to see where she was. She quickly realized she was in the medical room and to her amazement, she felt fine. She didn't really feel any injuries on her at all. She felt her body all over and sighed a relieved sigh.

"Phew…I survived." Natasha sighed to herself "That rocket didn't even hit me. Whoever fired it at me must have a VERY clumsy aim, there was no way it should have missed me. I do hope Diablo's not too worried about me. And the children too."

She threw her legs over the side of the bed and stood up from it.

"I'll go and find them and let them know I'm awake now, I bet they're worried sick about my well-being." said Natasha concernedly.

But before she could go anywhere, the door flung open and in walked Rozarr, the Martian messenger woman. She had a sword in her hand and a twisted look on her face. Natasha was quite surprised to see Rozarr here so suddenly but she didn't show it. She began wondering what she had a sword in her hands for.

"Oh…hello Rozarr." said Natasha slowly.

"Hello there Natasha." said Rozarr coldly "Good to see you're awake. So now you get to bear witness as I carve out your heart with this sword."

She then raised the sword and attempted to slice Natasha in two with it. Natasha squealed in fright and she jumped back to dodge the

sword. Rozarr tried to slash Natasha again but Natasha dodged and backed against the bed that she had been lying on. Rozarr advanced on Natasha and she scowled at her.

"R-R-Rozarr! Wh-what has gotten into you?" stammered Natasha.

Rozarr didn't answer her. She just slashed at Natasha but the Grand War Mistress lay down on the bed and crawled backwards onto it. Rozarr swung the sword down at Natasha only for Natasha to back away and fall off the bed onto the floor. Rozarr climbed onto the bed and stood over Natasha, the terrified Martian backing away fearfully from the messenger woman.

"W-w-wait! Th-this is about Diablo isn't it?" stammered Natasha "I-I-I thought we put that behind us!"

"I never put it behind me!" screeched Rozarr "I loved Diablo! You KNEW I loved him but then you went and married him! You never even told me you were engaged before you got married! I thought you were my best friend Natasha! You treated me like a sister when we were growing up and you marry the man I love without even telling me! You betrayed me Natasha and you must pay for it!"

She swung the sword at Natasha again but she missed as Natasha crawled out of the way fast enough. She kept crawling backwards until her back ended up against the wall. Natasha was trapped now and she couldn't get away. If she had her spiked nunchakus on her right now, she'd probably be able to fight past Rozarr and defend herself. As is, she was helpless and at the mercy of her former friend.

"Look Rozarr, I wasn't even interested in Diablo at first!" cried Natasha "I only fell in love with him because he saved my life once! I can't be ungrateful to him for saving my life can I?"

"You didn't have to steal him from me!" shouted Rozarr, her eyes filling with angry tears.

"I didn't even know you DID love Diablo!" cried Natasha feebly.

"Yes you did you liar!" snarled Rozarr "You KNEW I loved him but

you went and married him regardless of my feelings for him! Had you been upfront about it, I might have handled this a lot better!"

"I'm sorry about all that OK?!" screamed Natasha "I should have told you I was getting married! I shouldn't have kept it secret! I realize that mistake and I'm willing to make up for it now!"

"Too late you wretch!" snarled Rozarr "You betrayed our friendship and married the man I love! Now you will pay for it and I will be his rightful wife!"

"Diablo will only execute you for killing me!" retorted Natasha "He'll never love you! In fact, he NEVER even loved you to begin with! He loved me and that's why he married me! He told me himself that he never loved you! If you kill me now, he'll love you even less than he already does!"

"I don't want to hear anymore of your lies!" cried Rozarr, even though Natasha was actually telling the truth "You took my Diablo from me and now I'll take your life!"

She raised the sword high above her head and prepared to plunge it into Natasha's chest. Natasha screamed in horror and she put her arm across her face.

"Somebody please help me!" Natasha screamed at the top of her voice.

It seemed that somebody heard her for somebody ran into the medical room and rammed Rozarr aside. It was none other than Natasha's brother Zarondight! He'd been following Rozarr to the medical room and had been recording the whole ordeal to use as evidence against Rozarr should it come to an interrogation from Diablo later. Now Rozarr was attempting to kill Natasha, he'd decided now was a good time to burst in and ruin everything and he'd just rammed her aside. Natasha uncovered her eyes and she beamed happily at the sight of Zarondight standing defensively in front of her.

"Zarondight!" she cried "Oh thank Tyrahko it's you!"

Zarondight looked over at his sister and he smiled at her from behind his mouth plate. Rozarr picked herself up and she growled at the silent messenger and spy.

"You!" she snarled "How DARE you get in my way you mute moron! Get out of my way and allow me to take your stupid sister's life or I will kill you as well!"

"Zarondight, don't fight her, call someone for help!" ordered Natasha.

Zarondight refused to move and stood his ground. There was nobody to call on this ship since they'd all gone away to the battle at the Seedrian palace. Only Zarondight was here to sort Rozarr out now. Rozarr wielded her sword and she prepared to strike at Zarondight.

"I am going to kill Natasha and you will stand aside and be spared or you will die with her!" growled Rozarr "Now stand aside!"

Zarondight did not move. He just kept his steely gaze fixed on Rozarr, livid at the fact that she was trying to kill his own sister. Rozarr finally had enough and she lunged at Zarondight with the sword. Natasha screamed in fright for her brother as Rozarr swung the sword at him. Then Zarondight did the most incredible thing. He blocked her attacks with his arm blades! He blocked every single swing of the sword with his arms with no effort whatsoever. Then he lashed out and grabbed Rozarr by the neck. He hoisted Rozarr up off the floor and Rozarr gagged loudly as she was being throttled. Natasha gazed at Zarondight in amazement. She'd NEVER seen her brother fight before. Zarondight was clearly more amazing then she thought. Zarondight then tossed Rozarr over into a wall. Rozarr hit the wall and she slid down onto the floor. Rozarr picked herself up and she glared at Zarondight.

"I'll break your bones for that!" she screeched.

She ran over to Zarondight but the silent Martian merely picked up the sword and pointed it directly at her, forcing her to stop and stand down. Rozarr raised her hands and she knelt down onto the floor, knowing that she couldn't possibly stop Zarondight now he had a

sword in his hands. She had no battle prowess whatsoever so she couldn't possibly fend off somebody with a weapon. Rozarr fumed angrily as she admitted defeat.

"I…yield." she said with great reluctance.

Zarondight smirked at Rozarr and then he tossed the sword away. He grabbed Rozarr's head and then pounded on it hard enough to knock her out. Rozarr collapsed onto the floor, completely unconscious. Natasha was safe at last. She got up from the floor and threw her arms around Zarondight delightedly.

"Oh thank you, thank you, thank you Zarondight!" she squealed delightedly "Oh thank Tyrahko you saved me! I was nearly a goner until you came in! Oh thank you so much! You're the best brother a girl could ever ask for!"

Zarondight smiled from behind his mouth plate and he returned the hug. He loved his sister more than anything in the universe and would go to great lengths to protect her. If anybody dared try to hurt her, he snapped and would go to town on that person. After a long, grateful hug, Natasha broke up the hug and decided to ask something.

"So, now we've got the traitor knocked out, shall we take her to Diablo so he can decide what happens to her?" asked Natasha.

Zarondight just shook his head and played something on his recorder that he often played for Martians asking Diablo's whereabouts and he wasn't here. The message played out:

"If anyone's looking for me, I am on the battlefield right now. Please wait for my return, yours sincerely, Grand Warlord Diablo."

Natasha looked a little disappointed.

"Oh, he's out fighting Seedrians again." she muttered "Oh well, may as well keep Rozarr comfy until Diablo returns. Let's take that witch to the dungeon before she wakes up. And to satisfy you Zarondight, you may torture her when she wakes up."

Zarondight grinned at the very thought of torturing his sister's would-

be-murderer. Zarondight and Natasha grabbed Rozarr by the arms and legs respectively and they carried her out of the medical room.

"So, is everybody with Diablo right now?" asked Natasha "Or is he alone?"

Zarondight let go of Rozarr's legs and signed out "Everybody's with him" with his hands. Sign language was his best method of communication since he didn't have vocal chords to speak with.

"So it must be a full scale battle then." said Natasha "Wow, my hunky boy's taking no prisoners this time I bet. I can't wait to hear from him when he returns. Until then, let's just keep this ship in tip-top shape and prepare for his return."

Zarondight nodded and he picked Rozarr's legs back up. The two Martians headed off to the dungeon with Rozarr in hand. Boy were they looking forward to her punishment when Diablo heard about all this! It was going to be worth watching indeed…

Back over at the Seedrian palace, the battle between the Martians and the Seedrians was only continuing to get more hectic. The Seedrian's wheeled cannons fired at the Martians, the Martian's tanks fired back at the Seedrians and attempted to bring down the barrier and Martians and Seedrians everywhere began falling at each other's hands. The Martian tanks blasted the Seedrian palace's barrier but no matter what they fired at the barrier, they just couldn't lay a scratch on it. The barrier seemed to be impenetrable for it took every shot fired at it. The Martians seemed to be having an easier time fighting off the Seedrians then destroying the barrier for they had more leaders than the Seedrians and that gave them a bit of an edge. Martian soldiers were fighting Seedrian soldiers here and there and the leaders from both sides were fighting each other. With the exception of Diablo and Dark Oak though, the leaders had changed opponents. Black Narcissus was now fighting the twins, Marik and his siblings were fighting Yellow Zelkova (bit foolish of them) and Pale Bay Leaf, who had just been awakened after being knocked unconscious earlier, was fighting Mercury and Myra. Sycranna was still fighting off Seedrian soldiers and he was fending

them off very easily. He was much too skilled for a mere bunch of soldiers.

Dark Oak swung his sword at Diablo but Diablo blocked the blow with his mace. He clubbed Dark Oak directly on top of his head and left Dark Oak dazed for a minute. Taking advantage of this, Diablo walloped Dark Oak onto his side. Dark Oak picked himself up and he swung his sword at Diablo again. Diablo blocked the blow but then Dark Oak slashed him directly across the upper arm with the sword. Diablo screamed in pain and he clutched his throbbing arm. Diablo swung his mace at Dark Oak but Dark Oak sliced the mace's head off its stick. The mace head came down onto the ground with a heavy clunk. Dark Oak sheathed his sword and then suddenly began whaling on Diablo as much as he possibly could. He punched Diablo in the face a total of ten times, punching him rapidly and heavily so Diablo couldn't fight back for Dark Oak was moving too fast for him to catch up. Dark Oak didn't stop there though. He uppercut Diablo in the chin, salvia spraying out of his mouth as he was hit, and then he punched him in the gut. Dark Oak then raised his leg up high and kicked Diablo across the battlefield. Diablo hurled through the air like a tossed stone and he crashed into a tank. The tank withstood the impact of course for it'd take more then a Martian crashing into it to damage it. These tanks could withstand a rocket launcher. Diablo picked himself up and wiped some blood off his mouth.

"Urgh!" he spluttered "I admire your efforts Dark Oak. And I also admire your cunningness in how you've built a barrier for your palace so we can't touch it or invade it. But I'm also disgusted by it too. A warrior as valiant as you shouldn't have to succumb to cowardice just to win this battle."

"It is not cowardice Diablo; it's defending your home base." retorted Dark Oak "One of the best things to do in warfare is maintain your position. Something you war-lovers obviously know nothing about."

"We know EVERYTHING about warfare, including how to come over surprises like this!" snarled Diablo.

He charged over to Dark Oak and the two punched each other in the face. They both staggered backwards and then they charged at

each other again. Dark Oak and Diablo punched each other all over their bodies while also blocking each other's blows. Dark Oak swung his leg at Diablo but Diablo bent over backwards to dodge the kick and then Diablo tripped Dark Oak up by taking his other leg out from underneath him. Dark Oak landed with a heavy thunk on the ground. Diablo then grabbed Dark Oak by his ankles and threw him over into a Seedrian wheel-cannon. Dark Oak crashed into the barrel and knocked it slightly to the left so it ended up blasting a bit of ground instead of the Martian tank it had been aiming at. Dark Oak picked himself up and he unsheathed his sword. He charged at Diablo but Diablo blocked the sword strike with his arm gauntlet. He then grabbed Dark Oak's wrist and wrestled the sword out of his hand. The sword dropped onto the ground. Dark Oak grabbed Diablo's wrist and threw him over his shoulder and onto his back. Diablo picked himself up and socked Dark Oak in the face. Dark Oak retaliated by upper-cutting Diablo in the face with both fists. Then the two ended up grappling hands with each other and having an intense sumo match that would likely see no winner for a while. But Diablo suddenly lifted Dark Oak off of his feet and swung him over onto his back. Dark Oak quickly picked himself up and took Diablo's legs out from underneath him with a sweep of the leg. Diablo came down with a heavy thunk and Dark Oak then began throttling Diablo. Diablo effortlessly wrenched Dark Oak off of himself and got back to his feet. The two ended up grappling with each other again. They had linked arms and were pushing on each other as hard as they possibly could.

Black Narcissus vs. the twins was not going well at all. If Yellow Zelkova, the second strongest Seedrian in the army, was having trouble taking them on then what chance did he have? Dranzer uppercut Black Narcissus in the face and cracked his visor. Black Narcissus glared at Dranzer angrily.

"How dare you mar my beautiful armour!" he complained "I'll make you pay for that!"

"Your admiration for yourself is a grievous annoyance Narcissus." hissed Dranzer "You'd be wise to drop it before you end up worse then you already are."

Narcissus' response was to claw Dranzer across the chest. But his

attack just merely left scratches across his armour. Hardly damage worth complaining about. Dranzer sneered at the pathetic, vain Seedrian and he uppercut him into the air. Black Narcissus hurled through the air but before he could land down onto the ground, Obelisk ran in the way of the position he was going to land and he kicked him away. Black Narcissus spiralled through the air and came down with a terrible crash that cracked his visor even more and left dents in his armour. Dranzer and Obelisk drew out their cannons and they began shooting at Black Narcissus. His armour wasn't as resilient as Yellow Zelkova's so their shots began to do some damage on him. He was thrown backwards by the shots and his armour began to dent and crack under the heavy fire. Obelisk cackled delightedly at Narcissus.

"You're definitely no Red Pine or Yellow Zelkova Narcissus!" he crowed "Your armour will be cracked open like an egg when we've finished with you!"

Black Narcissus was too vain to admit this though so he ran over to Obelisk and punched him in the face. But compared to the girls, punching Obelisk was like punching a brick wall. Obelisk took the punch relatively easily as if it didn't really hurt him that much and he roundhouse punched Narcissus down onto the ground. He then aimed his cannon at Narcissus's cracked visor and prepared to blast him in the head but a group of Seedrian soldiers jumped on top of Obelisk and they wrestled him down onto the ground. Dranzer shot at them and knocked off a few soldiers, allowing Obelisk to stand back up. Narcissus however jumped in-between the twins and kicked them down onto the ground. Acting fast, Narcissus grabbed Dranzer's cannon and as the twins picked themselves up, he shot at them both. Dranzer's cannon was deadly enough against the Seedrians but against a Martian, it was just as effective. His cannon scorched bits of each twin's armour and then started leaving dents in it. Obelisk picked up his cannon and aimed at Black Narcissus. He shot Black Narcissus with his rotary cannon and Black Narcissus dropped the cannon after taking a round of heavy cannon fire. Dranzer retrieved his cannon but before he and Obelisk could shoot Black Narcissus, some Seedrian soldiers charged in and began shooting at them, aiding Black Narcissus in fending off the twins.

PaleBay Leaf was having an even sided battle with the girls so far. Mercury kept trying to shoot at him with her bow and arrows but Bay Leaf was miles too fast for her to tag. PaleBay Leaf was the fastest Seedrian in the army. He'd gotten himself a reputation for being slick and fast. Mercury gave up trying to shoot him so she charged at Bay Leaf and roundhouse punched him in the face. Bay Leaf staggered backwards but he quickly retaliated with a slash across the belly on Mercury with his sword. Mercury grimaced in pain and she fell down onto her knees. Myra jumped in to help Mercury but before she could use her magnetism hammer, Pale Bay Leaf sliced the hammer's head off. Without the hammerhead, the hammer wouldn't work. It was useless to Myra now. Myra fumed angrily at the sword-wielding Seedrian warrior.

"You'll pay for that!" she snarled "That hammer's not easy to make you know!"

"So what if it is?" scoffed Pale Bay Leaf "That hammer's a nuisance to us so without it, you'll be easy to take down."

"We'll see about that leaf boy." muttered Myra.

She then gut kicked Pale Bay Leaf and made him double over. Bay Leaf dropped his swords and Mercury and Myra grabbed them. PaleBay Leaf simply summoned new swords from airspace to his hands and he and the girls ended up sword fighting each other. They clashed swords with each other. Mercury maybe an archer and Myra maybe a hammer-wielder but they could still wield swords. PaleBay Leaf was secretly impressed by their swordplay for he'd never seen them wield swords before.

"I must say, I've never seen you wield a bladed weapon before girls." said Bay Leaf "I'm impressed somewhat."

"Thank you." said Mercury sarcastically "Now we'll use your own swords to send you to your own grave!"

The girls slashed Pale Bay Leaf across the shoulder blades each and Bay Leaf grimaced in pain. He retaliated with a few sword clashes and the three ended up pushing on each other's swords.

Marik, Silas and Sierra were not doing well against Yellow Zelkova at all. Usually, the three would keep their distance from this muscular engine of power when he was on the battlefield but they decided to try and see if they could defeat him. And how foolish they were to even try since Zelkova was far too strong for the three of them. Marik zapped Zelkova with his metal hand but Zelkova took the shocks for his armour shielded him well and he punched Marik. His fist was the size of a basketball so punching a three-foot tall Martian with a fist that big was going to do some damage. Marik felt like he'd been hit by a charging elephant. He hurled through the air and came down onto the ground with a heavy crash. Marik grumbled in pain and he picked himself up.

"Oooooh….." he slurred groggily "Now I remember why I never got into fights with this guy…"

Sierra tried feebly to bring down Yellow Zelkova with her arm-mounted crossbow but Yellow Zelkova took the shots without a scratch and he flicked Sierra away. He began cackling maniacally.

"You foolish children are no match for the mighty Yellow Zelkova!" he crowed "I am the mighty behemoth that towers over you all! I am invincible and I will smash you all into mush!"

"Eesh, and they say **I** brag too much!" snorted Marik.

He swiped the air with his arms and knocked Yellow Zelkova off his feet with an energy wave. Zelkova picked himself up and he was about to punch Marik again but Silas jumped in and slashed at him with his sword. Zelkova took the blow easily. Silas began slashing at Yellow Zelkova over and over with his sword but none of his shots affected Zelkova at all. Zelkova cackled at Silas and he broke the sword with a simple grasp of the hand. Silas gasped in horror as his sword blade crumbled in Zelkova's hand. Zelkova then uppercut Silas into the air with his other hand and cackled happily.

"You see? I am the cliffs and you are the waves! You strike and break against me!" he jeered "You cannot stand to the unstoppable Yellow Zelkova!"

"Does he ever shut up?" snorted Sierra.

"He will do when I do this to him!" growled Marik.

He aimed directly at Yellow Zelkova's visor and fired a jolt of electricity at it. The electric jolt cracked Zelkova's visor and Yellow Zelkova fumed angrily. He charged at Marik and tried to smash him into the ground but Marik dodged and he leaped onto Zelkova's back. He grabbed Zelkova's neck and gave him a painful electrical shock. His neck wasn't as protected as the rest of him so that shock began to hurt him. Zelkova grabbed Marik by the head and threw him across the battlefield. Marik landed on his head and he ended up lying on the ground and clutching his head in pain. Silas grew furious and he threw some punches at Zelkova.

"Nobody punches Marik except me yellow belly!" he shouted.

"Well I just punched Marik so there." snorted Yellow Zelkova, taking the punches as if they were nothing. He didn't even FEEL the punches. That's how strong his armour is.

Zelkova then grabbed Silas by the head and then…

CRACK!

He snapped his neck in two like a twig. Zelkova had just killed Silas. True Seedrians didn't really like killing but Zelkova was one of the more brutal ones and didn't really care about killing a Martian. Silas collapsed down onto the ground lifelessly, his eyes still open and staring out creepily as if he was a ghoul roaming around a murky graveyard. Sierra put her hands to her mouth in horror whereas Marik just scoffed. He hated Silas anyway because Silas was mostly a jerk to him so why would he care that his brother's dead?

"Puh, Silas was begging for that." he sniffed.

"Silas may have been a jerk but he's still our brother Marik!" shrieked Sierra "And Yellow Zelkova is going to pay for that!"

Marik and Sierra charged towards Yellow Zelkova but Zelkova simply uppercut them both into the air. Then suddenly, Dranzer and Obelisk grabbed Zelkova from behind and they both through him backwards into the barrier that shielded the Seedrian palace. They

had finished with Black Narcissus and decided to help Marik and Sierra take down Yellow Zelkova since they couldn't fend him off whatsoever.

Unfortunately for the Martians, things were beginning to turn against them. The wheel cannons shot at the Martian tanks and finally managed to take them down! The Seedrian cannons were more powerful then the tanks so that's why they were taking them down easier then the tanks were taking them down. The Martian tanks had only managed to take one down whereas the cannons had managed to take down all four tanks. Now the tanks were taken down, the Seedrians had the advantage over them now. The cannons began blasting at the Martian soldiers and blowing them all away. Diablo watched helplessly as his men were swiftly being blown away by the cannons. The Seedrians had a barrier around their home and their tanks had been destroyed. The ambush was a failure and the Martians were losing this battle. There was only one logical thing left to do now. Diablo had no choice but to retreat, the one thing he hated doing.

"Martians, we've lost this battle! Fall back!" he cried.

With that said, all the surviving Martians abandoned the battle and began running back to their ship. They all charged away from the palace and left the Seedrians behind to gloat. They had forgotten to pick up Galaxina though so the bound and gagged Seedrian was left behind to lie there and wait for somebody to free her. Dark Oak saw Galaxina lying there as the Martians were fleeing and he quickly rand over to her and freed her from her binds and gag. He picked up Galaxina and hugged her happily. Galaxina threw her arms around Dark Oak happily.

"Thanks for saving me dad!" cried Galaxina.

"You're welcome dearest." said Dark Oak "But you've got a lot of questioning to do young lady."

"I know, I know. I'm so sorry." said Galaxina "I'll explain when we're back in the palace."

"OK then." said Dark Oak "Seedrians, we've won this battle. Let us

go back into the palace to celebrate and then we shall take the convoy truck out to finish off those vile Martians!"

The Seedrians were all too happy to do so. The Seedrians all ran back into the palace, which had lowered its barrier since it didn't need to be up anymore. This battle was a glorious victory for the Seedrians but it wasn't going to last…

…for Count Nyder had just finished putting his bomb in the planet's core! While the big battle had been going on, he'd dug down to the planet's core and he place the bomb about fifty yards above it so it wouldn't melt and be useless. Feeling very pleased with himself, Nyder had returned back to the Martian ship and he had sneaked into the cockpit without Natasha or Zarondight seeing him. He was waiting patiently for the other Martians to return to the ship and once they did, he would pilot the ship and fly it away from Greengate. Once away from Greengate, he was going to set off the bomb. Nobody was going to stop him for nobody knew about this bomb. Greengate was doomed to be destroyed. Nyder waited and waited in the cockpit until he saw the Martians all running back towards the ship. He smiled to himself.

"Oh good, the troops have returned. Now we can leave this doomed world." he sneered to himself.

He waited until all the Martians had run back onto the ship. After a couple of minutes, the Martians had all boarded the ship again and Nyder instantly took off. He grabbed the levers and he started the engines. He pulled the levers back and the ship began to ascend into the sky. The Martians all staggered about in surprise as the ship began to take off. Diablo looked around wildly.

"Huh? Why is the ship taking off?" asked Diablo.

"Who's flying it?!" cried Marik "It can't be Sycranna, he's right here with us!"

"I'm the one who's supposed to be flying this ship!" exclaimed Sycranna "Who's taking over my duties?!"

The Martian ship rose up off the ground and then it flew off into the skies of Greengate, which were no longer blue and beautiful, instead they were brown and grainy. Diablo decided to find out who was flying the ship so he ran off to the cockpit. By the time he got there though, the ship had pulled into orbit and was quickly flying away from Greengate. Nyder smiled to himself and he got out the controls for the bomb.

"Now time for apocalypse." he said slyly to himself.

He pressed the button.

KA-BOOM!

A thunderous explosion erupted from inside Greengate and the planet was torn apart in seconds. Greengate was reduced to a pile of space rubble in little time and the explosion raged on for miles around. If sound could travel through space, the noise was likely going to be deafening. The Martians all stared out the window of the ship and they were gobsmacked at what they were seeing. Greengate was a pile of space rubble and no longer existed.

"Holy comets!" choked Marik "The planet…it's destroyed!"

"Greengate's no more!" gasped Sycranna "This means that we've won the war! We've defeated the Seedrians! Their planet's destroyed!"

"How is that possible?!" shrieked Sierra "We didn't do anything to do that did we?"

Marik then suddenly realized something.

"Nyder…" he snarled "He did this! Remember that he suggested we blow up the planet?"

"Yeah." said the Martians.

"Well he obviously decided to ignore my dad's orders and blow it up anyway!" cried Marik "He opted out of the battle so he could do his plan in secret! How did I not work that out earlier?"

"He told a convincing lie little Marik." said Mercury softly "He had us all fooled."

"Well I hope dad will punish Nyder for disobeying orders!" shouted Marik "As much as I'm glad we destroyed the Seedrians and we've won this war, we do not disobey orders to try and win a war! That's one of the golden Martian rules! That and win wars without cowardly tactics like blowing up a planet! Our former lord Tyrahko would not approve of this if he were still alive!"

"He would not indeed." muttered Dranzer "This cowardly victory of ours is a stain in our honour!"

"I will never live this down." sighed Obelisk "We'd better not resort to this tactic when we invade Mobius."

This whole victory had gained mixed receptions. The Martians were pleased that they'd defeated the Seedrians but they weren't pleased that one of their own had resorted to cowardly tactics and disobeying orders in order to win the war. Hopefully, they could make up for this by winning a fair war with the Mobians for they were going to target Mobius next…

Later in the cruise around space, Diablo was seeing to a couple of things. One was Count Nyder disobeying his orders and doing what he had given strict orders not to do. He had taken Nyder down to the dungeons and began beating him up seriously and horribly. After he'd finished with Nyder, he grabbed Nyder and slammed him against the wall. Nyder was bruised all over his face, some parts of him swelled up and his body felt limp and lame. It was as if he'd been walloped all over his body with a sack of rocks. If Diablo beat him any harder, his bones would surely break. Diablo stood over Nyder and he roared in his face.

"HOW DARE YOU DISOBEY MY ORDERS!" he thundered, his voice so loud that Nyder nearly went death "I CLEARLY STATED YOU WERE NOT TO BLOW UP THE PLANET BUT YOU DID IT ANYWAY! YOU'VE RUINED OUR REPUTATION AS FEARLESS, COURAGEOUS WARRIRORS! WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY

FOR YOURSELF?!"

Count Nyder could not speak for his face had swollen so much that it was difficult to talk. Diablo just sighed at the Count and he turned his back on him.

"I should have known better then to have you replace Count Drago!" fumed Diablo "He never resorted to cowardice! Subtlety was always his way of fighting! He'd be ashamed to see that this is the Martian that has replaced him!"

He then walked away from the beaten Count Nyder and he turned to Sycranna, who was in this cell with him and had been watching Diablo beat up Nyder.

"You give him what you deem a fitting punishment." said Diablo "I'm dealing with another prisoner. Don't kill Nyder though. Just do something that'll scar him so badly, he'll think twice about disobeying my orders!"

"Yes sir." said Sycranna with a cruel, sadistic smile on his face.

He walked up to Nyder and raised a long clawed finger. Nyder could only lie there and wait as Sycranna advanced on him and had his claw aimed for his left eye…

As Sycranna dealt with Nyder, Diablo stormed out of the dungeon and he walked over into another cell. This cell contained the treacherous Rozarr. She was chained up in her cell. She was dangling off the floor by chains wrapped around her wrists and had been tortured mercilessly by Zarondight's electro-clamp while Natasha had been watching with sadistic satisfaction. The torture had been on for so long that Rozarr had a scorch mark around her bare belly and she was barely able to remain conscious. Diablo strode into the cell and Natasha hugged him happily. Diablo kissed her on the forehead as if to see "Good to see you again babe" and then he turned his attention to Rozarr. Zarondight had already removed the clamp so Diablo could deal with her. Rozarr looked feebly at Diablo, her eyes barely able to remain open.

"As for you, you wretched little traitor!" snarled Diablo "How DARE

you try to kill my wife! I heard all about your evil attempts from Zarondight earlier so don't you dare deny anything! I thought you were my loyal messenger Rozarr! Why did you try to kill Natasha?"

Rozarr managed to rasp out her final words.

"Because…I…love…you…" she croaked weakly.

Diablo scoffed at her as if she'd said something horrible and disgusting to him.

"You love me?" he said "Well Rozarr, you were a valued messenger woman…but I NEVER loved you. Your heart ran away with your head dear. You were a good messenger woman and a good asset to my army. But I loved Natasha. She stole my heart from me and I wanted to have her as my Grand War Mistress. You were just fooling yourself if you ever thought I would fall for you Rozarr."

Those words were like a dagger through Rozarr's heart. She was horrified to hear all this. Diablo never loved her? He always loved Natasha? It was clear that Rozarr had completely wasted her time trying to kill Natasha and become Diablo's wife because it wouldn't have worked anyway! Rozarr could do nothing more then break down in tears. She sobbed for Mars but Diablo didn't show any signs of care or remorse for her. Nobody loves a traitor as they say. Diablo turned his back on the snivelling Rozarr and he turned to Zarondight.

"Finish her off." he ordered "The traitor doesn't deserve to live."

Zarondight nodded and he snapped the electro clamp around Rozarr's waist again. Rozarr didn't even attempt to resist her death sentence. After hearing that Diablo had to say to her, she no longer desired to live anymore. She actually *wanted* Zarondight to kill her now. Diablo took Natasha's hand and the happy couple strode out of the dungeon, leaving Zarondight to electrocute Rozarr to death. The dungeon door clanged shut behind them as Zarondight let Rozarr have it for the last time. Her screams could barely be heard inside the dungeon. Diablo and Natasha wondered off down the corridor hand in hand.

"This war has definitely been on of our most memorable wars out there." said Diablo "The Seedrians proved tougher then we've thought and we've lost many Martians. Including my brother and my eldest son."

"I'm sad about the loss of Silas and Count Drago but at least their deaths weren't in vain." said Natasha "We won the war at least. Although it would be nicer if Count Nyder didn't disobey orders just to help us win. I may have been onboard with the idea of destroying a planet just to win a war but one of our golden rules is we don't disobey orders, no matter what that order is."

"Obviously there are some orders that nobody will obey but orders like what I gave out should be followed." muttered Diablo "Oh well, we've defeated the Seedrians at last and there's one thing left to do now. Invade Mobius and avenge Marik and Drago."

"Pity we never got to find out where the Seedrian children are hiding." murmured Natasha "Because of this, the Seedrians aren't truly dead. The children will replace them all and then they'll reproduce and…"

"Let them." said Diablo "That way if we ever find them again, we can start the war all over again. And this time, we'll win it WITHOUT resorting to cowardly tactics."

"Fair enough." said Natasha "After all, we can't wipe out peace-loving beings everywhere if we don't kill every last one of them. For now though, there's only one target for us now…"

Diablo nodded as he thought on their next target: Mobius. Marik had typed in the planet's coordinates in the ship's navigation system so they'd find Mobius easily. Sonic and friends were about to get one heck of an invasion when they arrived…

And that's it for this saga! Well...the Martians have destroyed Greengate but the Seedrians still live for the evacuated children's whereabouts are unknown! In a way, both sides win this war. So what's next for the Martians as they invade

Mobius? Tune back into the main story for the Martian Invasion Saga begins...

So everybody, how was this saga for you? Was it good? Was it bad? Did you enjoy it? Do tell in the reviews section please, I'd love to hear your feedback.

Divide and Conquer: The Home Front 1

Arc 17: Divide and Conquer: The Home Front

The Martian Invasion Midquel

Takes place during Stories 127-133 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1: Home Invasion

Megapolis: A Few Minutes Before The Royal Fighters Depart…

Mobius had been invaded for the third time in many days. First there was the Devatron Invasion*. That invasion had been heavy on everybody. Lives had been lost, brave heroes had been crippled and the home city had been taken but in the end the Royal Fighters had managed to crawl out on top of it all. Then came the Black Arms Invasion** where the Black Arms had attempted to settle old grudges with Mobius and take back what had been stolen from them, their relics of destruction. That invasion resulted in Shadow finding out his true origins and realizing who he truly was and the aftermath of the invasion was Shadow officially being declared an honorary citizenship on Mobius and the Mobians now having eight Chaos Emeralds instead of seven. And now, the Martians had invaded***. Unlike the Black Arms or the Devatrons though, they didn't have the Mobians on the run the moment they invaded. Instead, the Mobians had THEM on the run. They had launched a full scale attack outside of New Mobotropolis but the Royal Fighters managed to get the Martians to retreat thanks to Thomas Tiger's clever thinking. They had damaged the Martian ship by blasting it with cannons and in order to save their ship from being destroyed, they had to retreat otherwise they'd end up being stranded on Mobius. Thus they had retreated and taken refuge in the plains of Megapolis. While there, Marik came up with the rather clever idea of dividing their resources and attacking seven different places on Mobius simultaneously in an attempt to get the Royal Fighters to do the same thing and make them easier to pick off****. The Martians

had all been departing one at a time to random places around the world. Marik had helped them in that regard by using the Chaos Cluster fragments he'd stolen from Dr. Eggman during the Devatron invasion. Using Chaos Control, Marik had opened gateways to seven random places all over Mobius and the Martians had departed to each of them. Right now, Marik and his sister Sierra were just about to depart to Soleanna. Marik had opened a portal to it and as Sierra, the Martian tank and their squadron departed to Soleanna, Marik handed Nyder the Chaos Cluster fragments. Count Nyder was the Martian tasked with staying behind, breaking into New Mobotropolis and then finding out where the Chaos Emeralds were. Nyder took the emerald fragments from Marik and Marik prepared to go.

"Good luck in your mission Marik." said Count Nyder "And let us hope we all return with good news to give."

"Oh we will Nyder, I know we will." crowed Marik confidently "I'm sure we'll all have very complacent victories we will. Now remember, those fragments are not to be lost to the Mobians, they're very important. When we complete our missions, you will use a Chaos Control to bring us back to the ship. All you have to do is yell "Chaos Control" and that'll warp you place to place or open portals to different places depending on which one you want to do. I recommend using the warping part of Chaos Control to get into New Mobotropolis secretly as a portal might attract some unneeded attention."

"I understand." said Nyder "And while you're picking off those accursed Royal Fighters, I will get into their city, lower the shields and then unleash a full-scale onslaught. We have at least six tanks left on the ship and I've still got plenty of soldiers so we will be able to launch one heck of an onslaught on that wretched city of theirs."

"I look forward to hearing how you do while we're gone Nyder." said Marik with a demon grin on his face "But you'd better make sure you succeed. Otherwise you may end up losing another part of your body."

Nyder fumed angrily at Marik and he put his hand over his eye patch. After disobeying Diablo's orders and destroying Greengate,

he'd had his left eye ripped clean out of its socket by Sycranna as punishment. He hated how the other Martians wouldn't stop bringing it up. Well hopefully, he'd get a chance to redeem himself once he invaded New Mobotropolis and the Martians would stop bringing that up.

"I've got the message." said Nyder through gritted teeth "I will make sure I do not fail."

"Good." said Marik "I shall see you later. May our road to victory and conquest commence!"

With that said, Marik jumped eagerly through the Chaos Portal and into the City of Soleanna where he would eventually battle Silver the Hedgehog and Blaze the Cat. The portal vanished the moment Marik jumped through it. Count Nyder was now alone on the Martian ship with a huge number of remaining Martians. Nyder looked at the Chaos Cluster fragments in his hand.

"Amazing these fragments have such power behind them." Nyder said to himself "I wonder how much power an actual Chaos Emerald has? Well, I'll kidnap a Royal Fighter or two should there be any left and see if the Visual-Mind Reader Link can give me any clues as to where those "Chaos Emeralds" are. Marik tells me there's seven but I have a feeling from these fragments I hold in my hand that there might be more. Well, there's only one way I'll find that out…"

He clutched the fragments tightly in his fist and thrust his arm into the air.

"Chaos…CONTROL!" he bellowed at the top of his voice.

The fragments glowed brightly in his fist as he yelled that and in the blink of an eye, Count Nyder vanished into thin air, leaving no trace of himself behind on the ship. He had warped himself out of the ship and if he was lucky…he would end up in New Mobotropolis…

…and that's exactly where he ended up! He appeared directly in the middle of New Mobotropolis just as he hoped he would. He

materialized in the middle of New Mobotropolis in a bright flash from the Chaos Control he'd just performed. Luckily for him, there was nobody around since the citizens were all in hiding thanks to the Martian invasion. Nobody would know he was here. The one-eyed Martian looked around and took note of everything in New Mobotropolis. Observing the enemy's territory was always a good idea, especially when you take notes of what's around you. Stuff like that can be very handy in a battle after all. Count Nyder grinned to himself, delighted at the fact he was in the enemy's territory and they had no idea about it…yet.

"It seems I've made it inside, and undetected no less." purred Count Nyder "These Chaos Emerald fragments Marik gave me are certainly useful aren't they?"

He put the fragments into a pouch in his right shoulder cape for safe-keeping and he looked around to see if any buildings struck him as important. He then spotted Castle Acorn and Royal HQ standing proudly above the rest of the city on a hill-top not far away from him. He didn't know what they were of course but he had a feeling they were important, especially Castle Acorn as it looked like a castle to him and they were always important.

"Hmm…those two buildings up there look important." Nyder said to himself "I think I'll check them out. Maybe that building next to the castle is the Royal Fighter's base of operations or something. After all, why else would it stand so near a castle like that one next to it?"

With that said, Nyder ran off towards Castle Acorn and Royal HQ to see what they were. He climbed up the hill and ran towards Royal HQ as he wanted to check out that building first. He sneaked into the headquarters by slowly opening the door and creeping inside like a little spider slipping through a crack in a wall. Nyder did this ever-so-quietly so as to make sure nobody could hear him and that he'd be able to sneak up on anyone in the building and see what's going on. He began wondering if the Royal Fighters had found out about the Martians spreading out across the globe and attacking seven different places all over Mobius yet. After all, the whole lot of Martians that departed before Marik did had left minutes ago. The Martians were bound to have started attacking by now. Nyder crept through the corridors of Royal HQ and he listened out for any

sounds to see if anybody was indeed in this building. As Nyder crept through the corridors, he spotted the door to the lab and he crept over to it to see what it was. He peeked through the door and he could see Tails, Bunnie and Ruben inside it and chatting away to one another. Their conversation was interrupted though for Tails had spotted something on the computers. They were receiving messages on the computer monitors. He went over to the computers and went to see what was going on and what kind of messages they were receiving. Nyder watched Tails do this and began to wonder if the messages were cries for help from the places the Martians had been sent to. If so then that meant the scheme was in action and he could begin his part of the plan. Nyder waited and waited until Tails finally leapt up from his seat and headed off out of the lab to tell his friends what he'd just found out. Nyder leaped to the side of the door…the wrong side that is. For when Tails burst out of the lab and ran off to the Royal HQ rest room where all the others were gathered, the door opened up and smacked him. Nyder resisted the urge to groan in pain as he was smacked by the door as it flung open into him. He watched as Tails, Bunnie and Ruben ran off to the rest room and he closed the lab door.

"I have a feeling my comrades have started their dirty work already." he crooned to himself "That twin-tailed thing looked pretty alarmed by what he saw on the computer monitors. I think I'll see what's startled him."

With that said, he sneaked off down the corridor as quiet as a mouse and followed Tails, Bunnie and Ruben to the rest room. They all ran inside the room and the door to the room slammed shut behind them. Nyder was pleased with this. That meant the Mobians wouldn't see him lurking outside the rest room and spying on them… until they opened the door that is. Nyder crouched down to the door and listened in as Tails frantically told everybody what he had just found out.

"Tails, buddy, what the heck's the matter?!" blurted Sonic "You look like someone just set fire to your tails!"

"You're not gonna believe this everybody!" shrieked Tails "The Martians have split-up and are attacking seven different places all over Mobius!"

That earned a chorus of gasps from all the Royal Fighters in the room. Sally in particular was shocked to hear all this. Outside the rest room, Count Nyder beamed like a happy little toddler.

Looks like I was right. he thought to himself *The others have started their massacres, now my part of the plan can commence!*

He listened on as the discussions continued from inside the rest room.

"Are…are you quite sure Tails?" said Sally hoarsely.

"Positive!" blurted Tails "The computers in the lab received seven messages coming from seven different locations all over the world! They came from Holoska, Grand Metropolis, Black Acropolis, Rail Canyon, Soleanna, Kingdom Valley and Megapolis! They're all under attack from the Martians! We've gotta stop them and fast!"

The Royal Fighters all mused to one another in wonder.

"This doesn't make a lick of sense at all." said the Royal Fighter tomboy Mandy Mouse "Why would those freaks invade Mobius, give us a big battle, flee because their ship's under siege and then suddenly divide their forces and attack random areas all over the world?"

"It's all part of their conquest I bet." said her husband, Wilson the Dog "After all, that's what conquest is isn't it? Take over the world? That means attack everywhere to ensure you conquer the world?"

"Wilson has a point mates." said Geoffrey St. John "But we ain't gonna let them blighters attack innocents and destroy valuable locations! We've got to stop them all!"

"But we can't stop *seven* different attacks all happening simultaneously!" shrieked Nicole in alarm "Not even Sonic can be in two places at once!"

"Indeed Nicole, which is why we're going to do what they're doing." said Sally "We're going to divide our sources and stop them. We maybe weakened for we won't be all together but we will do what it takes to save those places under siege."

"They do say "united we stand, divided we fall" but we're not gonna fall to the Martians, no siree!" declared Sonic "United or divided, we will stop them!"

"But we can't all go, who's going to defend New Mobotropolis?" noted Miranda Mongoose "I mean, what if the Martians haven't *all* gone to those locations and there's some left behind waiting to ambush us? I have a feeling the Martians have made sure there's some men left behind to attack New Mobotropolis as it's an important city for them to attack."

"I thought of that too Miranda." said Sally "Which is why I've decided to divide the Royal Fighters as follows: Sonic & Tails will go to Holoska, Wilson and Mandy will handle the Martians in Grand Metropolis, Knuckles and Shade will go to Black Acropolis, Bunnie, Geoffrey & Ruben will go to Rail Canyon, Silver & Blaze will deal with the Martians in Soleanna ,Amy, Cream & Cosmo will be sent to Kingdom Valley and Shadow and Rouge will be the ones to go to Megapolis. The rest of us will stay here and defend New Mobotropolis."

"Sounds good Sally-girl but do ya'll think we'll handle the Martians like that with us so divided and spread out?" asked Bunnie "Ah mean, we could be fightin' hundreds of Martians and in each place there's only two or three of us to do the fightin' due to the way you split us up."

"Come on Bunnie, we beat the Devatrons, our strongest enemies yet, the Martians will be nothing compared to them." put in Geoffrey, putting a hand on Bunnie's shoulder "We can handle those blokes."

"Ah'm sure we can sugah but it's just…" began Bunnie.

"Bunnie, there maybe a lot of Martians out there but I'm putting my faith in the heroes that I KNOW will stop a threat like this." said Sally reassuringly "I wouldn't spread you so thin if I didn't have any faith in any of you. When you encounter the Martians in your designated area, just focus on nothing but taking them down and should you need back-up, give us a call and we'll send reinforcements."

"That makes me feel a lot better." said Bunnie with her organic hand

over her chest "Thanks sugah."

"Anytime." said Sally happily "Silver, you still got your Super Warp Ring?" she then asked the silver furred hedgehog "We'll need it to transport the designated Royal Fighters to their respective locations."

"Sure thing your majesty." said Silver, fishing the warp ring out and twirling it around his finger.

"We'll use that to transport everybody to their respective destinations." explained Sally "And when they want to come back, I'll open up the warp ring and welcome our fighters back into Royal HQ. I'll keep the warp ring safe for Silver and Blaze as they go to their destination and I'll be the one to bring them back into Royal HQ when their mission's complete. Sonic and Tails will deploy first so open up the warp ring to Holoska Silver." she ordered.

"Just a secy Silver." said Sonic quickly before Silver could move a muscle "Me and Tails will need to warp up warmly, it's cold over in Holoska."

With that said, Sonic zipped off and in two seconds flat, came back with a pair of coats and a scarf each for himself and Tails (he IS fast after all). Sonic and Tails put on their coats and scarves and they buttoned the coats up to their chins. They'd be toasty warm over in Holoska with those big, thick coats. Sally walked up to the two and she put a hand each on Sonic and Tails' shoulders.

"You two be careful out there." she said, giving Sonic and Tails a big hug "We do not want to lose our best members."

"We'll be careful Queenie." said Sonic casually, hugging Sally back along with Tails "We'll be back before dinner, don't you worry. I know I'm gonna be fine since I've got Tails to back me up in this mission."

"Same to you Sonic." said Tails with a thumbs up to his best friend.

Then suddenly, somebody threw her arms around Tails and grasped him into a surprised hug. It was Cosmo. Cosmo was giving Tails a big farewell hug.

"Please come back safely Tails." begged Cosmo "I've lost my family, my friends, everybody on my planet. I don't want to lose my best friend on Mobius too."

"Oh Cosmo, I'll come back, you know I will." said Tails, stroking the Seedrian's face affectionately "And I promise you with all my heart that I'll make the Martians pay for wiping out your kind and making you the last. I promise."

"I don't want you to get revenge on them Tails, revenge is wrong and it's unhealthy." said Cosmo "I just want you to stop those monsters from bringing the same ruination to your world as they did mine."

"OK then, I promise you that." said Tails, giving Cosmo a peck on the cheek without her realizing it "Those Martians will be outta here before you know it."

Cosmo beamed happily at Tails' words. Sonic smiled at Tails too. He was impressed with how heart-felt the fox could be.

"That was beautiful Tails." said Sonic "Well Sally, we'll be off now. Goodbye for the moment."

"Goodbye for now." said Sally with an expression fit for a farewell scenario "And please, save Holoska from the Martians there."

"You got it." said Sonic "Sayonara guys and gals! We'll be back soon!"

"Goodbye Sonic." said everybody in the room.

With that said, Silver opened up the warp ring to Holoska and Sonic and Tails gracefully charged through the warp ring like a trained tiger leaping through a blazing ring of fire. Nyder was quite intrigued with what he had heard.

A warp ring? I guess it's a device shaped like a ring and it can warp you from place to place. thought Count Nyder *That kind of technology would be useful in our hands, I'll have to see if I can steal that "Super Warp Ring" off of the one called "Sally Acorn" as I bring in the others and tear this city apart.*

Those very thoughts made Count Nyder smiled to himself. Boy he had a lot of possibilities to redeem himself for disobeying Diablo back on Greengate! First he was going to lower the shields of New Mobotropolis, then he was going to level the city and kidnap some Royal Fighters now he knows there's some staying behind to protect the city, then he was going to use the Visual-Mind Reader Link on any of them to see if he can find the location of the Chaos Emeralds and then he was going to steal Silver's Super Warp Ring from Sally and see if he can use it against the Royal Fighters in any way as he tried to steal the Chaos Emeralds. Ah yes, he was certainly going to redeem himself once he did his part for the whole Martian stratagem that was being executed right now. He began to feel glad that he had been ordered to stay behind after all, it seemed he would be getting the most fun out of all the Martians...

Count Nyder stayed put for quite a while (he is patient believe it or not) and remained listening on and on until all the designated Royal Fighters (Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Shade, Amy, Cream, Cosmo, Geoffrey, Bunnie, Wilson, Mandy, Shadow, Rouge, Silver and Blaze) had gone through Silver's Super Warp Ring and left to deal with all the Martians that were attacking seven different places on Mobius. After Silver and Blaze left for Soleanna, Count Nyder got up to his feet and he crept away from the rest room and out of Royal HQ before someone could spot him. Nyder had been surprised on who had been sent to fight who and he had a feeling the Martians were going to win every single fight. He liked how he was left with Sally and all the others, he had the idea he was going to have an easier time than the other Martians since he had a feeling all the good Royal Fighters had been sent out to stop the Martians. The remaining ones didn't seem like much of a challenge to him but he remembered that Marik had cryptically warned him and the others not to underestimate the Mobians as it was going to be a costly mistake for them. Still, Nyder remained optimistic about this invasion and certain he was going to succeed in his goals. The first step in his plan though was to find the shield generator to New Mobotropolis and bring the shields down so the city would be prone to an attack. He didn't know if the force-field was up already or not but it didn't matter. He'd bring it down anyway once he found the shield generator and destroyed it. As Nyder stepped out of Royal HQ and looked around, he wondered to himself.

"Now…if I were a Mobian, where would I keep a shield generator?" he asked aloud to himself.

Nyder had no idea where the shield generator could be but he decided to have a good look around. He looked at Castle Acorn and Royal HQ again and had an idea.

"Hmm…" he mused to himself "Maybe the Mobians put it in a place that is so obvious it's overlooked. I've encountered many fools who do this. Mind you, it's not a daft idea as people often don't expect to find something in a place that's so obvious there's no point hiding it there. And we Martians are just the same, we often expect to find something in a subtle place. Experience as taught me sometimes you'll find something in a place you NEVER expect to find it…"

With that beady little idea in his head, Nyder ran around the back of Castle Acorn and looked to see what he could find back there. To his surprise, he saw a silver cube with flickering red lights sitting there behind Castle Acorn, covered by the looming shadow of the castle that stretched far out behind it. The cube was humming quietly. It was the shield generator but Count Nyder wasn't fully sure what it was. He had some idea that it was probably what he was looking for but he couldn't pinpoint for definite that it was the shield generator. For all he knew, it could be a generator for something else like a heating system in the castle itself. But Nyder was willing to take his chances and see if it was the shield generator. Nyder reached into a pouch in his left cloak pocked and he pulled out what looked like a handle to a sword but it had no blade. Nyder pressed a button on the handle and a long, sharp blade extended out of the handle like an extendable telescope (What? Were you expecting a lightsaber? Get real folks!). It was a sword with an extendable blade. Martians often carried swords like this in order to hide them easier from the enemy and launch a surprise attack. This sword was Count Nyder's most favourite weapon he ever wielded in his time on the battlefield. Nyder has wielded many weapons in his time but the extendable sword was his favourite. Nyder held the sword with the blade pointing down and he plunged it directly into the top of the generator. The generator sparked a little as it was penetrated by the sword. Nyder didn't stop there though, he yanked the sword out of the generator and plunged it into the generator again, stabbing it in a

different place this time. He then proceeded to stab the generator in twelve different places and then slash it, cutting out a nice, giant chunk of the generator. The generator sparked wildly as it was wrecked and then it started smoking. Nyder was full convinced that the generator was no longer functional. He retracted the sword's blade into the handle and he put it away into his cloak. He smiled at his handiwork as the generator made a groaning noise that made it sound like someone waking up rather groggily with a headache early in the morning. The generator was full of punctures and slots from all the stabbing done to it and a huge chunk of the generator had been sliced off. There was no way it was going to work now.

"I think that about does it." crooned Nyder happily "That thing won't be working anymore. I hope that that's the shield generator. If not, I'll have to sneak in this city again and see where I can find it. I will find out if that is the shield generator as I bring in my attack force to level this abysmal excuse for a city."

He then took the Chaos Cluster fragments out of his cloak pocket and he quietly said to himself "Chaos…Control" for shouting it aloud might attract attention and get him found out, not a good idea at all if you're trying to be stealthy. After he said "Chaos Control", he warped out of New Mobotropolis, leaving no evidence of his presence here at all. He had sneaked in undetected and now had sneaked out undetected. He really was getting good with using Chaos Control, considering he'd never used it before. And that wasn't good for the Mobians at all. He'd used Chaos Control to infiltrate them from the inside and chances are he was going to use Chaos Control to do even more deadly things to the Mobians…

Meanwhile, back in Royal HQ, the remaining Royal Fighters were still standing around and talking to one another. The Royal Fighters that were left were Team Chaotix (Espio the Chameleon, Vector the Crocodile and Charmy Bee), Team Adabat (Scott the Lynx, Jessica the Cougar, Taran the Lynx and Felix the Peacock), Team Nekronopolis, also known as the Northern Royal Fighters (Miranda the Mongoose, Kari the Rat and the chipmunk twins Thunder & Bolt) and Team Megapolis (Thomas Tiger and Kiara the Cheetah) as well as a bunch of Royal Fighter soldiers from each region the respective

teams came from (except Team Chaotix for they're not really Royal Fighters, just a team of three heroes). Queen Sally Acorn and Nicole the Lynx were going to aid the Royal Fighters in defending New Mobotropolis from the inevitable Martian attack since there was a sneaky suspicion amongst the R.F.S. that the Martians might not all have gone out into Mobius and there might still be some left to attack the city. Right now, Sally had gone into a changing room to change her clothes. She felt like she needed an outfit change again and was changing her outfit right now. Nicole was left to watch over the Royal Fighters in the room and was joining in their discussions.

"So guys and gals, do you think Sonic and friends can handle those Martians now they've split up all over Mobius to fight them?" asked a very concerned Vector "I don't mean to worry over them but I really care about my buddies and I don't want the Martians to kill them you know."

"I admire the fact you have such a big heart Vector." said Miranda kindly "I share your concerns for the Martians are just as unpredictable as the Devatrons are. I mean, who honestly can say they saw this stratagem of theirs coming? Spreading their forces across the globe and in turn, force us to do the same just to stop them?"

"Not even the cleverest of us could have calculated such a well thought-out stratagem." said Felix "Those Martians may not be as powerful to defeat as the Devatrons but they're equally as conniving and intelligent I can easily say."

"I'm just glad that silver dude warned us in advanced about this whole invasion otherwise we wouldn't have been be prepared for this." put in Kiara "Pity he can't tell us everything that happens since his resources are missing some details according to him but at least he helped us prepare for this. I do wonder if the Martian invasion leads to his future being the way it is…" she added solemnly, remembering what Silver had shown her. She didn't half feel sorry for the future-dwelling hedgehog that he was living in such a ruined world, and the fact it was Mobius' future made it even worse for him and made Kiara feel uneasy that Mobius becomes a wreck in the future.

"They're not fully sure but they're giving it a try." noted Nicole "They're dedicating their lives to make sure our future does not end badly for us and that Mobius lives on and doesn't come to an end. God bless them for their selflessness." she added with her hands clasped together and held over her heart.

"I agree with that." said Espio "As for the Martians and their strange tactics, I have a feeling I know what their game is."

"Don't be silly Espio, they're not playing games at this moment." said Charmy with his arms folded.

"I don't mean that kind of game Charmy." said Espio in a patient but somewhat irritated manner both at the same time "I mean, I think I know what they're up to. They think that dividing their resources across the globe and in turn, making us do the same, is going to make picking us off easier I bet."

"The chameleon's got a point." agreed Kari "Since our resources are spread out to tackle the Martians, they think that because less of us are fighting them, they think they'll beat us easier. If that is the case, it's a good plan by any means. I mean they've been described to us, by Cosmo, as being war-loving monsters right? So every one of them will be battle capable whereas us Mobians, we only have everybody in the R.F.S. and Team Chaotix. There's bound to be more Martians than R.F.S. members."

"The same could be said with the dumb Devatrons and we still beat them." crowed Charmy, a big childish smirk on his always smiling face "We'll beat the Martians no matter how many there are."

"Say what you will about Charmy but we can all agree he's optimistic." chuckled Vector brightly "And that's why me and Espio love him on our team."

"Optimism's a good trait to have." said Nicole, nodding agreeably "Optimism can help when you're in a tough situation after all. It's always good to have a little optimism in you I say."

"That's probably why we Royal Fighters always win in our battles!" cried Scott, punching the air happily "Because we remain optimistic

no matter what the situation is! We may have our setbacks but we pull through in the end. Something those Martian freaks probably aren't counting on right now."

"Probably but given Marik's had experience with us, he'll have likely told all the Martians about us and what our strengths and weaknesses are." noted Thomas grimly "That's one advantage the Martians have over us, one of their own has encountered us and thus, knows all the tricks of the trade on Mobius."

"Maybe not all the tricks of the trade but yes, he'll have told the Martians plenty about us." said Nicole, curling her index finger around her upper lip in a thoughtful manner "Whereas we already knew we were coming thanks to Silver, they already know who they're up against thanks to Marik. This battle could easily be a no-win situation. But should things go wrong, we always have our ever wonderful Chaos Emeralds. Marik knows about them already but I don't think he knows where they are so we have the element of surprise on our side and a hidden trump card that will guarantee the Martians don't win."

The Royal Fighters all gave of a chorus of happy "Ooohs" around the room. That little statement made everybody feel happy and hopeful about their battle with the Martians. Nicole grinned with them. She liked it when she made people smile, especially when it meant they were smiling about something really good like beating the Martians. Before anybody could say anything else though, Sally Acorn came back into the rest room. She had finally finished getting changed and everybody stared at her in amazement. Sally was now wearing a dark blue crop-top with a white stripe in the middle of it, a belt with a silver buckle that was as shiny as actual silver, dark blue shorts with a white trim at the bottom of the legs, black fingerless gloves with light blue wrist sections and dark blue knee high boots with white stripes around them. She still had her light blue vest on but it was unbuttoned and opened up, revealing her crop-top and belly and she had her blue bo-staff in hand beside her too. Everybody gave off a chorus of "Wow!"s at the sight of Sally.

"Wow Queenie, you look great!" blustered Vector in surprise.

"Is it just me, or did you just somehow get even hotter now you're

wearing that?" said Scott slyly, a grin of approval spreading out on his face.

"She looks wonderful!" cried Thunder happily "She proper looks like she's ready to fight now!"

"She looks like she's ready to fight no matter what she wears!" laughed Bolt.

Sally giggled at everybody's reactions to her new outfit. She wasn't expecting an applause like this from everybody.

"Hee, hee, hee! Thank you everybody!" chuckled Sally "I will admit, this outfit looks a lot better than the other one I wore a moment ago. I look proper adventurous dressed like this. I think I'll wear this outfit more often, it looks really good on me and makes me look more like a fighter than before."

"It certainly does." said Nicole "I'm happy you've decided to contribute more to the R.F.S. despite the fact you have to rule over New Mobotropolis."

"Well Nicole, ever since the Devatrons and Black Arms, I decided I needed to become a more active fighter in our struggles against Eggman and all other villains we face so I've upped my training and chosen an outfit that makes me look less like a queen and more like a fighter." explained Sally "I know I said I couldn't be part of it before because of my responsibilities as queen but I then realized "Who says a queen can't fight for the very city she rules over?" and decided to be a more active fighter. That and fighting for the world isn't going to be much of a hindrance to my royal duties in all honesty. I wish I'd joined the R.F.S. earlier."

"Well now you've got your chance to join us in beating the Martians your majesty." said Jessica brightly "I bet the citizens of New Mobotropolis will be thrilled to see that their queen is fighting for the very city she rules over. You'll be setting yourself a great image among the people."

"Aw, thank you Jessica." said Sally graciously "I wonder what mom and dad would have thought to me wanting to be a fighter though, I

don't think they would approve of it as they often worried about my safety and what kind of danger I could get into. But I'm willing to face the challenges I may face in order to defend my people, my kingdom and most importantly, the whole world. I bet dad in particular would admire such bravery from me as he often admired those with a courageous heart." She finished, putting a hand over her chest as she thought about what her father, Maximilian Acorn often said to her when she was growing up.

"They'd be very proud of you Sally." said Nicole, putting her hands on Sally's shoulders comfortingly "I'm certainly proud of you Sally. I'm honoured to be the lady-in-waiting to such a brave queen like you."

Sally looked at Nicole and smiled with pleasure.

"That's awful nice of you to say Nicole, thank you." said Sally, touched by Nicole's words "I'm glad to have such a wonderful lady-in-waiting."

With that, Sally and Nicole gave each other a friendly hug, earning a chorus of "awws" from the Royal Fighters. They thought that was real cute to see two great friends being so wonderful to each other. It made many of them think of their friendships with each other like the Chaotix and their friendships with each other, Team Adabat and their friendships with each other, Team Nekronopolis and their friendships with each other and many more. But this lovely moment was rudely interrupted by a loud bang from outside that made the ground beneath their feet shake. Everybody looked around wildly, wondering what it was.

"What was that?!" shrieked Taran worriedly.

"We must be under attack!" yelled Scott "Those damn Martians DID live some goons behind to attack us!"

"They must be attempting to level the city!" shrieked Sally "Nicole, raise the shields now! We'll go out and take care of this attack!"

Nicole obeyed instantly and took a bead off of her left ponytail. While everybody else belted out of Royal HQ like a herd of wildebeest,

Nicole pressed on the bead and it transformed into the control stick for the city's shields. She pressed the button on it and ran outside with the others, assuming that the shields had been raised. But they weren't! Nyder had indeed destroyed the shield generator and because of this, New Mobotropolis was vulnerable to attack from the attacking Martians! As Nicole ran outside and joined the others, she realized that they had stopped dead in their tracks and were watching as six Martian tanks stood ominously outside the city gates and were attempting to blow them down, as well as firing the occasional shot into the city itself. One tank fired at a house and blew it to smithereens instantly. The other five blasted at the gates and were beginning to break through! The Royal Fighters were horrified to see this and Scott grabbed Nicole by the arms.

"What are you doing woman?! Raise the bloody shields!" Scott shouted directly into Nicole's face.

"I just did!" shrieked Nicole "But it's obviously not working!"

She pressed the button on the control stick again but the shields still didn't raise and they could tell this from the fact the Martian tanks were still managing to damage the gates and blow up the odd house or two in the city. Nicole pressed on the control stick and it transformed back into a bead and she put it back onto her hair.

"I don't understand though, it worked perfectly when they attacked before!" wailed Nicole "Why aren't they working now?"

"I think I can guess." said Sally through gritted teeth "A Martian must have sneaked into the city while we were sending Sonic and the others to deal with the Martians out there and destroyed the shield generator. Kari, get a toolbox and see if you can fix it." she ordered.

"Oh, OK your highness." said Kari nervously "I'm not that good at fixing generators though, I'm not a very skilled mechanic, I'm only a novice."

"I'm sure you can do it Kari." said Miranda supportively "Now go Kari, we need that shield generator fixing before the Martians break through the gates."

Kari obeyed and she ran back into Royal HQ to get a toolbox so she can try and fix the shield generator. As for the others, Sally pointed her bo-staff ahead of her and yelled out.

"Royal Fighters, ATTACK!"

With that order given, the Royal Fighters (sans Thomas Tiger for he's wheelchair bound of course) hurried into battle. They stampeded through New Mobotropolis and they burst through the city gates. They were now outside of New Mobotropolis and out into the open where six Martian tanks, Count Nyder and a bunch of Martian soldiers were waiting for them. The Royal Fighters all bent down into battle ready stances as the Martians glowered at them and prepared to open fire on them. Count Nyder grinned at the Royal Fighters and he drew out his extendable sword.

"Greetings Royal Fighters." he said smugly, pointing his sword at them "I am Count Nyder and I'm the Martian that's been tasked with destroying New Mobotropolis and finding the location of your "Chaos Emeralds". I request that you stand down and save yourselves from a good beating or face death. This will be your only warning."

"You can forget it Nyder!" snarled Sally "We don't cede to anybody who threatens our lives and well-being! Even the Devatrons couldn't make us give in and they're a hundred times the threat you war-loving monsters are! We will send you packing or die trying!" she twirled her staff around after saying that.

"I can certainly help with the last part." sneered Count Nyder "Martians, ATTACK!" he bellowed.

"Royal Fighters, attack and don't hold back!" shouted Sally.

The Martians and Mobians all charged towards each other, crying out loud battle cries as they did so. Count Nyder went for Sally and Nicole for he deduced that they were the most important ones out of the bunch, especially as Sally was referred to as a queen a few times while he spied on them. Sally and Nicole leaped towards Nyder and they both pile-dived the insidious count in the gut. They brought Nyder crashing down onto his back and Sally pressed her staff against Nyder's throat in an attempt to pin him down. But

unfortunately, it didn't work. Nyder pushed Sally off of himself and got back to his feet. He swiped his sword at Nicole, narrowly missing her as she ducked, and Nicole retaliated with a well-thrown uppercut to the face. Nyder staggered to the side and he rubbed his face better.

"Huh, that was a good punch." he muttered "And yet you don't look the fighting type. Marik was right to warn me about under-estimating you heathens."

"He certainly was." said Nicole coldly, her teeth and fists clenched and her face narrowed into a very serious scowl, an expression not often used by her "There's more where that come from too!"

Nicole then jumped into the air and dropkicked Nyder in the head. Sally jumped in and pile-dived him directly in the back. Then to add insult to injury, Sally tripped him up by smacking him in the legs with her staff. Nyder landed painfully on his back and he groaned in pain. Sally tired to whack Nyder with her staff but Nyder held up his sword and blocked the blow. Nicole then lunged at Nyder but Nyder shifted Sally's staff into the position where Nicole was aiming it, causing her to punch the staff instead. Nyder then suddenly lowered his sword and rolled out from underneath the staff. He picked himself up and swiped his sword at Sally and Nicole. The two Mobians dodged the attack and Sally putted Nyder in the gut with her staff.

"You're a lousy fighter." taunted Sally "Me and Nicole are only novices, me more so than Nicole, and already we have you on the ropes. How did you get into the Martian army then?"

"My battle prowess maybe weak but my skills with weapons are all I need to finish my opponents off!" growled Nyder, punching Sally in the face.

Sally staggered backwards, rubbing her face affectionately and Nyder swiped at her with the sword. He nearly slashed her in the belly but he just missed her by centimetres. Sally whacked him in the head with her staff but Nyder retaliated by swinging his sword at Sally and slicing the staff in two in one fell swoop. Sally gasped in horror as her staff was now in half and she leaped back to avoid another slash from Nyder. She picked up the other half of her staff

and whacked Nyder with both halves. Nyder kicked her and brought her down onto the ground, spluttering heavily. Nyder prepared to slash at Sally with his sword but Nicole jumped in and kicked him to the side. Nyder growled and slashed at Nicole but Nicole grabbed his wrists and twisted them to the side, making Nyder drop the sword. She then pushed Nyder away and grabbed the sword. She pointed it at Nyder but Nyder didn't stand down. He ran towards Nicole and grabbed her by the wrists, trying to wrestle his sword out of the lynx's grasp. Nicole held on tight and wrestled heavily with Nyder. The two grunted heavily as they fought for control over the sword. Nicole won the struggle though by kneeing Nyder directly in the groin. Nyder's eyes opened wide as he was hit in his sensitive area and Nicole elbowed him directly in the eye, knocking him down onto the ground. She then pointed the sword at Nyder and Sally stood beside her, glaring at him.

"You're beaten, now order your men to stand down and leave here at once Count Nyder or we will be forced to end you." warned Sally coldly.

Suddenly, the two were blasted in the back by a pair of Martians and sent hurling across the battlefield. Nyder smirked at the two girls and he picked himself up.

"Thank you soldiers." he said gratefully "Now, I think I'll kidnap those two and take them back to the ship. Maybe their minds contain the information I require, information the Visual-Mind Reader Link will display for us."

Nyder reached out to grab the stunned Sally and Nicole but before he could, Vector and Espio both jumped onto the scene and Vector sucker-punched Nyder in the back of his head. Nyder hurled forward and he crashed into the ring wall surrounding New Mobotropolis. Nyder lay at the foot of the wall, wondering which way was up. Vector and Espio helped Sally and Nicole back onto their feet and Charmy hovered around concernedly, hoping they were OK.

"You OK girls?" asked Vector.

"Uh…we're OK, thanks for the help Vector." said Sally, rubbing her head better.

"Anytime." said Vector "What do you think we should do now?"

"I think our next method should be to take out the tanks." said Sally "Stop them from breaking down the gates of the city and destroying homes."

"No need to worry." said Espio "Team Adabat are already onto that."

"And they're doing a great job!" cried Charmy happily.

Over to Team Adabat, they were indeed taking out the Martian tanks. The tanks had nearly broken the gates down after all their heavy firing. If they had anymore shots, they'd take the gates out instantly. But Scott and Jessica had put a stop to that by firing energy spears at the tank's barrels, destroying them and rendering them incapable of firing anymore. The furious tank drivers attempted to run over any Royal Fighters by steering the tanks towards them but Scott and Jessica threw energy spears at the tank treads and destroyed them in a matter of seconds. Then Scott pounced on one tank and gave it an energy-enhanced punch that left a giant dent in it. Taran, who was armed with a plasma cannon similar to what Miranda had, blasted what was left the tanks to pieces with one giant blast of the cannon. Felix just watched as his team mates took out the tanks. All six tanks had been taken out by Team Adabat and were now useless to the Martians. Scott and Jessica's hands stopped glowing and Scott admired their handiwork.

"Not bad eh babe?" he sneered "We took all the tanks out! That'll stop them from breaking into the city."

"Indeed it will Scott." said Jessica "But we've got the Martians themselves to take out still so don't celebrate yet."

"Ah they'll be easy as pie." said Scott, cracking his knuckles "Taran, Felix, let's take out the Martians!"

"Definitely Scott." said Felix, swooping off towards the Martians with his tail feather clubs in hand.

Team Adabat ran off to fight some of the Martian soldiers. Team Nekronopolis and Kiara the Cheetah were already fighting some of

them. Kiara jumped onto one Martian's head and knocked him down onto the ground. She then jumped off of that Martian and dropkicked another on onto the ground. Despite her fear of aliens, she was doing rather well in this match. She was using her fear of aliens to her advantage in this battle for her fear of aliens was making her fight stronger and harder as she fought to send the Martians packing. Fear can be useful as well as a hindrance at times after all. One Martian butted Kiara in the back with his rifle but Kiara twirled around and roundhouse kicked the Martian in the head. She then grabbed his rifle and smacked another Martian with it as if it was a golf club and the Martian was the ball. Kiara smirked at the downed Martian soldiers she had been fighting.

"Ha! Not bad for a rookie I must say!" she crowed.

But her luck was about to run out for a Martian blasted the ground behind her heels and she was sent hurling forwards and came down onto the ground face-first. The Martian that had shot at her advanced on Kiara menacingly, his rifle primed and ready to kill her. Kiara backed away fearfully from the Martian, staring directly at the rifle. The Martian aimed at Kiara's chest and prepared to shoot her. Once he pulled the trigger, Kiara would be dead in one second flat. But a lightning bolt shot out from nowhere and struck the Martian's rifle, blowing it up in his hands and rendering him unarmed. It was Thunder and Bolt. They had decided to jump in and save Kiara. The Martian grumbled at Thunder and Bolt and he ran towards the two chipmunks. Thunder and Bolt just simply held hands and they electrocuted him both at once. The Martian yelped in pain as he was electrocuted and he passed out onto the ground. Thunder and Bolt high-fived each other.

"Now that's what I call a fried Martian!" joked Thunder.

"I agree and if we keep on going, we'll have a side order of MORE fried Martians to go with that one!" laughed Bolt.

Kiara smiled graciously at the two chipmunks and she got up onto her feet.

"Thank you for saving my life you two." she said thankfully.

"You're welcome Kiara." said Thunder brightly.

"We love saving lives me and Thunder do." said Bolt "Care to help us and Miranda take out some Martians?"

"Definitely." said Kiara "Let's go!"

With that said, they all ran off towards Miranda Mongoose where she and some other Martians were having a shooting contest. Miranda blasted at the Martians with her plasma cannon and made them back off while they began shooting at her. Miranda had her cannon set to stun mode for she didn't want to kill any of them. The Royal Fighters Service didn't believe in killing unless it was necessary after all. She shot two Martians and knocked them out but another Martian shot at her and skimmed her across the shoulder. Miranda squealed in pain and clutched her shoulder.

"Ouch!" she grunted "Ooooh, how I wish Kate was here! She'd be very useful to us right now!"

Unfortunately, she wasn't for Kate the Eagle had been tragically killed by Raicor during the Devatron invasion so Miranda was on her own for this one. Miranda regained herself and shot the Martian that shot her, knocking him out instantly. To her delight, her battle was about to become easier for Thunder, Bolt and Kiara ran in on the scene to give her a helping hand. Thunder and Bolt zapped a couple of Martians with a lightning bolt each and Kiara charged in and roundhouse kicked another Martian onto the ground. Miranda beamed happily at the Royal Fighters helping her and she continued knocking Martians out with her plasma cannon's stun blasts.

As for Team Chaotix, they and Team Adabat were busting up a few Martians between them. Vector snapped his jaws at one Martian and made him back off. Two Martians tried to shoot at him but Vector dodged their attacks and he socked them both one at a time. That punch knocked them out instantly. Another Martian ran towards Vector and he punched him in the gut. Vector took the blow and he uppercut the Martian in the face.

"Why are we even worried about these bozos? They're pips!" crowed Vector "I've taken on Eggman robots that were tougher then

these losers!"

"Looks like dividing their resources wasn't a good idea after all." mused Espio, punching one Martian in the gut and throwing a kunai at another "They were much stronger when they attacked shortly after they arrived here. Their plan's been costly on their part."

"You said it Espio!" giggled Charmy as he stung one Martian in the backside and made him yelp in pain.

Vector laughed with Charmy and he sucker-punched another Martian in the face. Espio took a couple of Martians out with his ninjitsu skills and sent them sprawling on the ground and Charmy flew around kicking and stinging any Martians he could while dodging the gun fire. As for Team Adabat, they had this in the bag. Scott and Jessica let some Martians have it with their energy powers, Taran blasted at them and Felix batted them with his tail feather clubs. The peacock observed as his team mates were beating up the Martians one at a time.

"The Martians are putting up a most abysmal performance." he said "We are single-handedly taking them down as if they are nothing. That is most fortunate for us."

"I agree with you there Felix!" laughed Scott as he uppercut another Martian in the face and sent him flying into the air "These guys are push-overs!"

"I bet if they didn't divide their resources, they'd be putting up a much better fight!" cried Jessica as she punched another Martian and sent him hurling into the wall "I'm glad we're having an easy time right now!"

The others nodded agreeably as they fought more Martians. This fight was going well so far but it was soon going to turn against them for Count Nyder had a sneaky trick up his sleeve. A trick that was going to get him some Royal Fighters to kidnap and take back to the ship…

Meanwhile, in the Northern Border of Megapolis, the nefarious Dr. Eggman was assigning missions for his robots. He had heard all about the Martian invasion thanks to Katherine hacking into Mobius' satellites and radio stations and he was sending his robots over to help any of the Royal Fighters take down the Martians. He'd sent out Metal Sonic and Silver Sonic as well as some new robots such as Metal Tails, Metal Amy and Metal Knuckles and they had all taken some Egg-Pawns with them. The Metal Series had already gone to fight the Martians. Only Eggman's loyal servant Katherine and his the notorious Devion the Devatron Leader were left and Eggman was about to assign them a job or two.

"Now there's only two jobs left to assign some robots to…" purred Dr. Eggman in a smooth, crooning voice as he stared at Devion and Katherine "And I know just the bots for those two jobs. Devion!" he shouted, pointing at the Devatron-turned-Eggman ally "You will go up to the surface and deal with the Martians outside of this border! The satellite feed Katherine has given me states there's a Martian in the region of Megapolis itself."

"I shall comply to my given task immediately Dr. Eggman." said Devion with a loyal bow to the fat scientist with the big bushy moustache "No Martian shall remain alive when I am through with them."

"Good." said Eggman coldly "Because I do not want any Martians wondering into the Northern Border of Megapolis and finding us! The fact there's Martians so close to us at this very moment worries me dearly!"

"Do not fear on this imperative situation doctor, I shall make sure the Martians do not get anywhere near your grand base." said Devion in a loyal tone of voice (he wouldn't be like this if he was his normal self!)

Devion then stood up straight and marched out of the room to get to his task. He did not want to stand around for a minute longer, he wanted to get out there and please his master by stopping the Martians from taking over the planet he so wished to conquer. The moment Devion left, Dr. Eggman smiled to himself brightly.

"I'm so glad I took his body and refurbished him as a minion of mine." said Dr. Eggman in a prideful manner "Having a Devatron on my side certainly makes me feel like the most powerful man in all the universe."

Katherine nodded agreeably. Having a Devatron on their side truly was one of the greatest fortunes that Eggman had ever gotten in his on-going battle with the Mobians. Pity he hadn't really had the chance to be put to good use yet but fate had been throwing things in the way so it couldn't be helped really. Devion had performed quite admirably when fending off the Black Arms and he was bound to impress again when he fought the Martian that was in Megapolis. Dr. Eggman turned around and put an arm around Katherine in the manner of a gentleman putting his arm around a lovely lady.

"As for me and you my sweet little Katherine, we're going for a little ride." purred Dr. Eggman "A ride to New Mobotropolis. We're going to team up with the Royal Fighters and give them valuable information. And that information is the whereabouts of the Martian's ship. Thanks to your hacking skills getting us into Mobius' satellites, we've pin-pointed that the Martian ship itself is here in Megapolis about a hundred miles from where Devion will be going. This'll be an offer the Mobians can't refuse and I'll get the pleasure of destroying their very ship!"

He then started cackling like a madman and Katherine played a clip of someone cackling as if she was laughing with him. The two then walked off to board a hover-saucer and fly off to New Mobotropolis where they would meet with Queen Sally Acorn and make a temporary alliance with her and the remaining Royal Fighters in order to ensure that the Martian ship gets destroyed…

Footnotes:

*** We all know THAT gem of a story arc from *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 100-115 don't we?**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 120-125**

***** It's all started in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 126 and is not over yet…**

****** You've just seen all that in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 127-133**

Well this is exciting! Count Nyder's making his move and the Martians are attacking! Who will win this epic battle between Mobians and Martians? And what will happen when Dr. Eggman arrives on the scene? Will he be of much help? Find out next time in Part 2 of this brand new* Tales from Mobius *arc next time...

Divide and Conquer: The Home Front 2

Arc 17: Divide and Conquer: The Home Front

The Martian Invasion Midquel

Takes place during Stories 127-133 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2: Captured Comrades

The battle outside of New Mobotropolis raged on and the battle seemed to be going in the favour of the Mobians. Count Nyder had been left behind to break into New Mobotropolis, lower the shields and see if he can find the location of the Chaos Emeralds while all the other Martian leaders departed to parts far and wide all over Mobius to draw out the Royal Fighters and make them easier to pick off. So far, Nyder had done a good job. He'd broken into the city and destroyed the shield generator and now he and the remaining Royal Fighters that had stayed behind to defend New Mobotropolis in the event that any Martians had been left behind to attack them were battling for the city. The Royal Fighters defending New Mobotropolis were Queen Sally Acorn, her lady-in-waiting Nicole, Team Chaotix and the R.F.S. teams, Team Adabat, Team Nekronopolis and Team Megapolis. All the teams were doing brilliantly and this battle was going the Mobian's way so far. Only Nyder was really putting up even a remotely decent effort and even he was getting his backside kicked out in the battlefield. He was fighting Sally and Nicole once again. Nyder swung his sword at Sally and attempted to take her head clean off her body but Sally ducked and whacked him with the two-halves of her bo-staff (if you remember, it had been chopped in half in the previous chapter). Nyder staggered backwards, rubbing his face better and Nicole ran around behind him and pile-dived him in the back. Nyder was sent hurling towards Sally and Sally leaned back on her hands, raised her legs up and kangaroo kicked him directly in the face just as he was about to crash into her. Nyder felt like his face was about to shatter to pieces like glass from that attack. He hurled backwards and directly over Nicole, giving her the

chance to jump up underneath him and punch him in the back, throwing him up even higher and sending him hurling over onto his stomach. He came down into the ground with a terrible thump and he found himself gasping and wheezing for breath. The impact left him a little winded. Sally and Nicole high-fived each other.

"Awesome kick Sally!" cried Nicole.

"Thanks, you gave Nyder a good pile-dive to the back Nicole." complimented Sally "I'll be amazed if he can even stand after that attack."

Then Sally should prepare to be amazed for Count Nyder, fighting the tremendous pain in his back, face and stomach, slowly but steadily managed to pick himself up and pull himself onto his feet. The two girls stared at Nyder in disbelief. The Martian was certainly resilient, they'd give him that. He's still standing no matter what kind of beating he takes. Nyder stood up very straight and he clutched his sword tightly in his hand. His face was twisted into a death glare at the two girls. Sally and Nicole just raised their fists and prepared to fight again.

"You're persistent Nyder, I'll give you that much." muttered Sally "You sure can take a beating can't you?"

"That is one of the Martian's most prominent and well-known traits after all, their amazing endurance." bragged Nyder "Since we Martians are always training and fighting 24/7, we just naturally grow to be resilient and hard to take down. Our endurance is one of our secrets to our success."

"I believe you on that, Marik was known for being endurable and resilient." said Nicole greyly "And given he's just a child and we're against an adult, I bet you're more so than Marik is."

"I am to some degree." said Nyder "And that will be the reason why we Martians will destroy you Mobians."

"No it won't, because we Mobians are quite endurable ourselves, and equally as persistent." said Sally "We've taken down worse villains than you Martian scum. We've even defeated the **Devatrons**

themselves and they were the strongest beings in the galaxy before their cousins, the Startrons, invented a virus to wipe them out. What does that tell you?"

"It tells me that you Mobians definitely don't deserve to be under-estimated although you probably beat the Devatrons due to pure dumb luck." sniffed Nyder "Now enough talk you miserable child, prepare to be skewered!"

He lunged forward with his sword and nearly impaled Sally in the belly with the blade of his sword. Sally yelped in fright and blocked the blow with her two staff halves. Nyder pushed on Sally's staff halves and began to push her down onto her knees. Sally strained to push back on Nyder but he was too strong for her. Nyder grinned maliciously at Sally as he pushed her down onto the ground.

"As well as break into your city and lower your defences, I've been tasked with finding the so-called "Chaos Emeralds" that Marik's told all of us about." crowed Nyder "Maybe I'll kidnap you and see if you can tell me where they are."

"The only thing I'll be telling you…is to get out of my kingdom!" shouted Sally.

She then suddenly rolled out from underneath Count Nyder, making the startled Martian fall forward and onto his hands and knees and the tomboy queen jumped up onto her feet. Before Nyder could stand back up, Sally uppercut him with both staff halves and sent him rolling over across the ground. Nyder picked himself up only to get elbow thrusted in the back by Nicole. Nicole then kicked Nyder in the back of the head, knocking his helmet off as she did so and she tripped up Nyder with a swift kick to the legs. Nyder came down with a heavy thud onto his back. Nicole then noticed she'd knocked Nyder's helmet off and could see some thick bony lumps all over his cranium. She cringed at the sight of them but then realized that Nyder was vulnerable to a head blow since his helmet was off and she decided to take the opportunity while she had it. She kicked Nyder in the cranium as hard as she could. Nyder screamed like a boy who's got his fingers trapped in the door and he clutched his throbbing head in pain. He made an awful noise and moaned ever so horribly. Nicole watched Nyder and realized something.

"The top of their head…it seems to be their weak spot…that's why they wear the helmets!" she cried happily "Sally, I've found a weak spot on them!"

"I saw." said Sally "Well done Nicole. Now we know another weakness of theirs. Their craniums seem very sensitive to a hard blow, that's why the Martians all wear head gear. We'll have to focus more on knocking their helmets off as we fight them so we can smack them on the head."

But Nyder stopped moaning in pain and he picked up his helmet. He put it back on and got back to his feet.

"That hurt you heathens! We Martians have very sensitive heads and we do not tolerate being hit on them!" roared Nyder "I will carve out both of your hearts for that!"

"Oh shut up already!" sighed Sally, butting him in the gut with one half of her staff.

Nyder doubled over and Nicole tried to take his helmet off but Nyder lunged at her with the sword, forcing Nicole to step well back before she could get skewered like a kebab. Nyder slashed at Sally and just nicked her across the cheek as she bent backwards to dodge his attack. Sally had a light cut across her cheek but it didn't bother her much, she'd had worse before. Sally whacked Nyder on the head with her staff halves…and broke them in two for Nyder's helmet was quite strong and her staff had been wearing out a bit from constant use. Sally gulped at the fact her weapon was now in four pieces and she grumbled to herself.

"Did I seriously think I was going to fare well in a battle against the Martians…WITH A STUPID STICK?!" she screamed in fury.

"If you did, then you really are simple-minded aren't you?" sneered Nyder "The staff is always one of the inferior weapons a warrior can wield. You need a proper weapon like what I've got." he crowed, twirling his sword around.

"I don't need a weapon." sneered Sally, throwing an uppercut to Nyder's face and completely taking the Count by surprise.

Nyder was sent hurling onto his back by that attack. He was so shocked at that blow to the face, he couldn't move for a second or two. It was as if Sally completely stunned him with that uppercut. Nicole giggled and she ran over to Nyder and elbow-slammed him in the stomach like a professional wrestler. Nyder gasped a wheezy, winded gasp as Nicole slammed him in the stomach with her elbow. Nyder coughed and spluttered heavily after that attack. He had no idea that the lynx in the purple toga could elbow thrust that hard. He was beginning to wonder if Sally and Nicole were even novices like they claimed to be for their fighting prowess seemed to be above the usual novice standard. Maybe the two girls were just lucky and were one of those fighters that could throw powerful blows to make up for their lack of skills. Nyder picked himself up and he uppercut Nicole in the face, knocking her down onto her back and he stomped on her stomach, making the lynx gasp in pain. Sally jumped on Nyder and tried to wrestle him down onto the ground but Nyder threw Sally off of himself and onto the ground. Sally and Nicole picked themselves up and they ran towards Count Nyder. The two girls pounced on Nyder and the three ended up wrestling with each other.

I bet you've had enough of watching Count Nyder vs. Sally & Nicole haven't you? So let's go over to the other Royal Fighters and Martians out in the battlefield. The Martian soldiers weren't faring up well against the other Royal Fighters. Their best weapons, the tanks, had been taken out and the Royal Fighters were taking them out with almost no effort. Some soldiers were putting up a better effort than the others but that wasn't saying much. It was like saying a wrecked up car is better than one that exploded, that is to say better but not all that much. Team Chaotix, which consisted of Vector the Crocodile, Espio the Chameleon and Charmy Bee, were fighting a trio of Martian soldiers that were a few of the better performing ones in the battle. The Martian trio were all armed with maces and they swung them at the Chaotix. One Martian almost clouted Vector in the jaw with his mace but Vector jumped back just in time to dodge the attack. Vector snapped his jaws at the Martian in an attempt to scare him off but the Martian stood his ground and slugged Vector in the stomach. He then walloped him on the top of his head with his mace but Vector shrugged off the blow long enough for him to retaliate. He ran into the Martian and grabbed him, making him drop his mace. He carried the Martian off and slammed him into the ring

wall surrounding New Mobotropolis. The Martian broke free of his grasp by kneeing him in the gut and making him let go. Vector stumbled backwards and the Martian spun-around and kick-slammed him in the side of his face. Vector rubbed his face better and the Martian jumped at him…and landed directly into Vector's arms. Vector squeezed the Martian as hard as he could and then swung him around and slammed him into the wall as if he was a hammer hitting a nail. Vector then proceeded to slam him into the wall again, spinning around onto his other side and he then slammed him onto the ground. He then added an extra slam by picking him back up and slamming him back-first against the wall and pinning him there. The Martian glared at Vector.

"Alright meat-head, you wanna play?" he sniffed "Now we play for real!"

He then head-butted Vector in the snout and made him let go of him. Vector clutched his throbbing nose in pain and the Martian ran around behind Vector and forced his arm behind his back. Vector effortlessly broke out of the grasp though and he grabbed the soldier in a headlock.

"You're tough buster, but not as tough as me!" growled Vector in his usual grizzly tone "And believe me when I say I'm just going easy on ya right now! I'm just about to cut loose on ya freak!"

Vector then released the Martian from his headlock and he sucker-punched him into the wall as hard as he could. Vector always loved it when he was able to punch a villain, it always made him feel good. The Martian growled furiously and he and Vector linked arms with one another. They pushed on each other's arms, trying to force the other onto the ground. Vector won the match by using a dirty trick. He opened his jaws wide and threatened to bite the Martian's arm to which the Martian flinched and let go, leaving Vector the opportunity to double-upper cut him directly in the face with both fists. The Martian hurled into the wall again and he lay there, wondering which part of him to rub better. Vector appeared to have won his little battle. As for Espio, he and the Martian he was fighting were evenly-matched so far. This Martian was one of the highest ranking of the Martian soldiers and he had battle skills that nearly matched one of the Martian leaders' skills. The Martian gave Espio a left hook and a

right hook and then he fist-slammed Espio on his shoulders. Espio retaliated by jabbing him in the gut with his horn and then ninja-chopping the Martian in the face a couple of times. The Martian took the blows and he kneed Espio in the mouth. The attack left him with a bleeding lip. Espio wiped the blood away and he jumped onto the Martian's shoulders hands first. He somersaulted over the Martian by throwing his legs over and he landed behind the Martian. He then roundhouse kicked him in the legs and tripped him up. He threw shuriken at the Martian's wrists and pinned him down onto the ground. But the Martian wasn't down for long. He managed to break out of the shuriken and he threw them at Espio. Espio performed some ninja-style gymnastic skills to dodge the shuriken and he threw a kunai at the Martian. The kunai ended up skimming him across the neck just above his shoulder. His armour protected the impact for the neck is covered up by a thick fabric that the Martian soldiers wore to protect their necks from some attacks. Espio jumped towards the Martian and ninja-kicked him down onto his back. The Martian picked himself up he drew out his mace. His mace had spikes in every direction and looked very vicious and dangerous.

"Nice skills lizard man, but can you best the mace?!" he cackled maniacally, swinging the mace at Espio and just narrowly missing him as Espio somersaulted out of the way.

"I can easily best the mace, especially as the arm that wields it fights dishonourably and foolishly." taunted Espio, turning invisible and leaving the Martian bewildered.

He looked around wildly as he tried to find Espio but the chameleon was nowhere to be seen. He was invisible and he crept up quietly behind the Martian soldier. Espio then pile-dived the Martian in the back, causing him to fly forward and land on his stomach. Espio turned visible again and he grabbed the Martian's mace. He swung it around and threw it as far away from the battlefield as possible. The Martian fumed at Espio and he fist-slammed Espio on top of his head. Espio was stunned for a moment but he quickly regained his senses and he gave the Martian a roundhouse punch to the cheek. He drew out another kunai and he slashed at the Martian with it. His kunai wasn't sharp enough to penetrate the Martian's armour

though. He just left scratches across it as he slashed at him. The Martian drew out a dagger that he had hidden on his belt and he and Espio clashed weapons with each other as they swung them at each other. The Martian managed to snag Espio across his wrist but the wrist section of Espio's glove took most of the impact for him, and now had a long cut across it. Espio stabbed at the Martian but the Martian blocked his kunai with his dagger. The two ended up pushing on each other's weapons and trying to bring the other one down onto the ground. Espio got the drop on the Martian by sticking out his long, sticky tongue in the same fashion a real-life chameleon sticks its tongue out and he ended up licking the Martian across the mouth. The Martian flinched, disgusted at the fact Espio just did that to him and Espio took the opportunity to ram him in the gut with his shoulder and then roundhouse kick him onto the ground. Espio had learned once that anything can be a distraction, even your own body and his tongue had really helped him distract the Martian long enough to land a blow on him. The Martian growled at Espio and he stabbed at him with his dagger but Espio reached under his arm, flung his arm up to knock the Martian's arm up and then weave his away around to the back of the Martian and head-butt him in the back, making sure that his horn was aimed just right so he could provide additional pain for the Martian as he head-butted him. The Martian screamed in pain and Espio tripped him up with a roundhouse kick to the legs again. Over to Charmy, he was doing his usual tactic of flying around like a demented falcon and launching the odd attack or two at the opponent. He buzzed around the Martian he was up against and charged directly into his face, his head lowered and bearing most of the impact (thank goodness he wears a helmet eh guys?). The Martian was thrown down onto his back and Charmy aimed his stinger at him. He flew down towards the Martian and prepared to sting him but the Martian swatted him away with his club. Charmy hurled to the side and landed down face first onto the ground. He picked himself up and glared at the Martian.

"Hey, that hurt you big jerk! I'm gonna give you a sting so bad that you'll feel it for the rest of your life!" yelled Charmy.

"Just try it you blasted, manic, perpetually moving animal!" snarled the Martian, patting his other hand with his club.

Charmy picked himself up and whizzed towards the Martian like a flying javelin. He aimed his stinger at the Martian and aimed directly for his arm. The Martian however clubbed him to the side and sent him crashing down onto the ground once again. The Martian ran towards Charmy and attempted to flatten him with the club but Charmy rolled out of the way, leaving the Martian to club the ground instead. Charmy jumped up onto his feet, buzzed up to the Martian and socked him directly in the face. The Martian growled at Charmy and he swung his club at the bee. Charmy ducked and he kicked the Martian in the face, laughing mockingly as he did so. The Martian fumed in a frustrated manner at Charmy and he clubbed at him again. Charmy dodged again and he uppercut the Martian in the face. But his luck soon ran out for the Martian recovered quite quickly and clubbed him down onto the ground once again. Charmy winced in pain and he tried as hard as he could to fight it despite how overwhelming it was. The Martian grinned evilly at Charmy and he raised his club high above his head, ready to deliver the killing blow to Charmy. But before he could so much as attempt to make the swing, Vector and Espio charged at the Martian and they both punched him away, sending the Martian hurling across the battlefield a good distance. Charmy jumped back onto his feet excitedly.

"Wow, that was awesome! Do it again!" he cheered "And thanks for saving me too!"

"Anytime Charmy." said Espio "When this is over, I'm going to have to tutor you some more on your battle skills. Your lack of any real fighting prowess will be the end of you someday."

"I know, I'm sorry that I'm not as good as you and Vector." said Charmy downheartedly "I'm just not that strong I guess. I do try my best in a battle, honestly I do."

"We know you do Charmy and we like that." said Vector supportively "We'll just have to toughen you up a bit so you'll be even stronger and you'll fare better in a fight."

"Aw, thanks guys." said Charmy happily "You're the best, you know that?"

"We know Charmy. Now let's all fight together and stop those vile Martians." said Espio, twirling his kunai around.

"Team Chaotix, GO!" cried Vector in a proper commanding tone of voice.

The three detectives all charged off towards a group of Martian soldiers that were aiming their rifles at them and preparing to shoot them. The Chaotix dodged all the shots and as soon as they reached the Martians, they began to cut loose on them, using all their skills and abilities as they began to attack the Martians.

As for the Royal Fighter teams, they were faring just as well as Sally, Nicole and the Chaotix were which goes without saying really. Team Adabat, which consisted of Adabat residents Scott the Lynx, Jessica the Cougar, Taran the Lynx and Felix the Peacock, were giving the Martian soldiers a really tough time given they were one of the most powerful teams in the R.F.S. Scott and Jessica both summoned energy to their hands and they gave a couple of Martians energy enhanced uppercuts each and the Martians were sent hurling through the air. The two energy-enhanced Mobians even decided to throw energy spears at the Martians just to add insult to injury. The Martians lay on the ground, wondering which parts of them to rub better. Scott and Jessica high-fived each other triumphantly.

"Oh yeah! That's how you dish it out hey babe?" laughed Scott.

"It is indeed handsome." agreed Jessica "But we can't celebrate yet, the Martians are still fighting and fighting hard. We can't lose our heads in this fight."

"Don't worry Jessica, I've got that in mind." said Scott reassuringly "Although I'm pretty amazed the Martians are putting up such a bad fight, we're absolutely whupping them out here."

"I have noticed the abysmal performance the Martians are putting up too Scott." said Felix "I do not even believe the Martians were worth fretting about. They make Eggman's forces look challenging in comparison."

"I'm with you on that." said Scott "I doubt even more that the Martians are the ones who end the world and leave the future a wreck for Silver and Blaze given how we're beating them so easily. Mind you, maybe them coming here to warn us might have helped with that…"

"Um, Scotty?" said Taran "Can we talk less and fight more? The Martians aren't going to get defeated themselves you know."

"Oh yeah, sorry Taran." said Scott, regaining his thoughts "Ahem, keep at it team and don't hold back!" he ordered "We must show the Martians what we're truly made of!"

With that said, the team charged back into the battle as more Martians ran towards them to deal with them.

The other teams, Nekronopolis and Megapolis respectively, were still putting up a great performance too. Team Nekronopolis, which consisted of Miranda Mongoose and the chipmunk brothers Thunder and Bolt (Kari the Rat's in New Mobotropolis fixing the shield generator if you remember) were taking down the Martians one by one. Miranda kept stunning them all by shooting them with her plasma cannon which was set at stun mode. Once she shot them, they were knocked out momentarily. The Martians she had shot earlier had woken up from the stun but Miranda merely just shot them again and knocked them out again. Thunder and Bolt just zapped the Martians by throwing bolts of lightning at them. The two chipmunks clearly seemed to be enjoying this for they were laughing like a pair of hyenas as they zapped the Martians. Team Megapolis, which just consisted of Kiara the Cheetah and some R.F.S. soldiers, were fighting alongside Team Nekronopolis. Kiara pretty much just used her super-speed and fighting skills to bring down the Martians. She may only be a rookie but she sure knew how to kick some butt out in the battlefield. She ran around behind one Martian and kicked it towards an R.F.S. soldier. The soldier merely punched the Martian away. Kiara then kicked another Martian towards Thunder and Bolt and the two chipmunks zapped the Martian by throwing lightning bolts at it. The Martian landed on the ground with a thud and the two chipmunks laughed at it.

"Hey, do you think the Martian felt that enough Thunder?" asked

Bolt.

"I don't think he can feel anything anymore right now Bolt!" chortled Thunder.

"Thank you Kiara." said Miranda "You're providing us some good assistance out here."

"Thank you Miranda." said Kiara happily "In the R.F.S., I help all teams whether it's my own team or not. I wonder if I'll climb out of the rookie rank at long last after this battle."

She then ran towards another Martian and punched it in the face while Miranda, Thunder and Bolt kept up their battle with the Martians.

Back over to Sally, Nicole and Count Nyder, Nyder kicked Nicole down onto the ground and elbowed Sally in the gut, making her double over in pain but the girls struck back hard with a double-punch to the face each. Nyder took the blows but he staggered backwards a little. Nicole jumped up to Nyder's height and she kicked him as hard as she could in the chest. That attack made Nyder gasp horribly and Sally ran towards him, threw herself down onto the ground, slid across it towards him and wrapped her legs around his legs. She twisted them to the side and tripped Nyder up. Nyder fell down onto the ground with a heavy thunk that shook him a little. He got up onto his hands and knees only to see that all around him, the Martians were losing. Team Chaotix, Team Adabat, Team Nekronopolis and Team Megapolis were all giving the Martian soldiers a run for their money. Martian soldiers all around were getting pummelled and beaten and the Mobians were winning. Nyder couldn't believe this. The Mobians were faring much better against the Martians than even the Seedrians were! This was going to be quite frankly, the Martian's quickest defeat ever! The Mobians were clearly stronger then any of them could ever imagine! No wonder Marik himself had a tough time with the Mobians, they were a powerful race indeed. Nyder began to dread how the others were faring up against their opponents out in the other regions of Mobius. If this lot were giving him a tough time then who knows what the Mobians that had left to deal with the Martians that were attacking seven different places all over Mobius were like. Mind you, the

Martians that were out drawing the best Royal Fighters out were among the best in the army so they might be having an easier time than him. Hopefully when they won their battles and returned, they could help swing this battle in their favour. As is, Nyder was on his own for this one and he was losing badly. But then suddenly, Nyder remembered he had a secret weapon that could help swing the battle in his favour. The Chaos Cluster fragments Marik had given him! Nyder beamed happily as he remembered he had them. He picked himself up and faced Sally and Nicole. The two girls were getting ready to deck him once again.

"Nyder, this battle is lost to you. We are winning." crowed Sally in a clam but stern manner "I suggest that you forfeit this battle and save yourself even further humiliation."

"Forfeiting to you cretins is humiliation in itself!" snapped Nyder "I'm not giving up this fight!"

"Please Nyder, just give up already and save you and your kind further punishment!" yelled Nicole "I would if I were you!"

"Well you're not me so there." said Nyder coldly "And besides, I have a secret weapon that I'm about to use on you right now…"

He then reached into his cloak pocket and whipped out the Chaos Cluster fragments. He kept them tightly in his fist and he yelled at the top of his voice "Chaos…CONTROL!" Before Sally and Nicole knew what was happening, the world suddenly seemed to freeze around them and they couldn't move. Nyder stared at the frozen Sally and Nicole and he grinned evilly at them. He remembered Marik telling the Martians that Chaos Control can freeze time as well as teleport the user place to place. Nyder took the opportunity to uppercut both Sally and Nicole in the face while they were frozen. The Chaos Control around them unfroze and they hurled through the air. They both landed on their backs and they grimaced in pain from that attack. Sally sat up and stared worriedly at Count Nyder. Her face was ashen with shock.

"Wh-wh-wh-what? H-h-how c-c-c-can you u-u-use a C-C-Chaos Control?!" gasped Sally hoarsely.

"Why should I tell you that?" sneered Count Nyder "You'll just have to guess on that matter."

"I think I can." said Nicole "I remember when we were about to be executed by the Devatrons, Eggman told us that Marik fled by using some Chaos Cluster fragments that he apparently had in his possession*. I bet Marik's given them to you hasn't he?"

"Wow, your brain truly is magnificent little girl." crooned Nyder "You've guessed correctly. Marik used these fragments to come back to Greengate and rejoin us in our battle with the Seedrians as well as tell us all about you. Now he's trusted me with them and I've used them to sneak into your city and destroy the shield generator. Now I'm going to use them on you and win this battle!"

"Not a chance Nyder, for me and Nicole are going to confiscate them from you!" cried Sally, lunging at Count Nyder like a pouncing tiger.

Nyder just simply held his still-clenched fist out and performed yet another Chaos Control, stopping Sally dead in her tracks. Sally was frozen in mid-air thanks to the Chaos Control. Time all around her had come to a stop and in a few minutes, it would start up again and return her to normal. Count Nyder laughed at Sally and he pointed his sword at her. Given Sally was frozen in time, she didn't react in anyway to him.

"How simple it would be for me to gut you then and now." crooned Nyder "But I'm going to see if that head of yours contains information I require. I'll just get something out to knock you out with and then I'll take you back to my ship. I'll probably take your toga-wearing accomplice with me too and see if she knows anything too."

He then retracted his sword blade and put it away on his belt. He reached into a pocket in his left cloak and pulled out something. They looked like steel-marbles but only larger, about the size of a snooker ball. He had three of them in his hand and they were anything but marbles. They were an ingenious device invented by the late, great Martian scientist Professor Korark known as "Electro-orb zappers" and they were often used to knock the enemy or any prey they were hunting for food out to save themselves a load of

bother if the Martians were in a lazy mood. All you had to do was put the orb near somebody and it would zap them into unconsciousness. They were programmed to do just that and if one orb knocked somebody out, another orb couldn't knock that person out so you had to make sure you didn't waste your shots. Nyder inched one close to the still frozen Sally's face but Nicole jumped in and uppercut Nyder in the face, throwing the insidious count down onto his back and causing him to drop the orbs. The orbs however had something else to them…they could bounce. Thus they bounced through the grasslands the Mobians and Martians were fighting in and they ended up near three different targets. One orb landed behind Kiara, another landed in-between Scott's toes and the last landed just where Charmy Bee was being thrown down to by a Martian. Nyder rolled over onto his front so he could see where his orbs had landed and if they were going to knock anybody out. They did, much to his delight. Kiara, Scott and Charmy were all stricken by a horrible, yellow-coloured electrical surge that crackled through their bodies and made them scream in agony. The electrical attacks were horrible and very powerful too. So powerful they were knocked out almost instantly by the tiny orbs. Kiara, Scott and Charmy all collapsed onto the ground after being shocked into unconsciousness. Count Nyder beamed with delight whereas Nicole looked in horror. She had just unintentionally helped Count Nyder knock some Royal Fighters out! Had she not done that, Nyder wouldn't have dropped the orbs and thus, ended up accidentally knocking out three random fighters right now.

"Oops!" spluttered Nicole weakly.

"Thank you for doing that to me you simpering child." taunted Nyder "I've just gotten three captives to take home to my ship and interrogate for information of the Chaos Emeralds. If they don't yield any information I desire, I'll come back for you and Queen Sally. And if you two don't have what I need then I'll keep getting each and everyone of you until one of you gives me the location of the Chaos Emeralds."

"Neither of us will be telling you anything!" yelled Nicole lunging at Count Nyder like a lynx usually pounces when hunting prey "Especially as so few of us here even know where the Chaos

Emeralds are kept!"

Nyder just held up the Chaos Cluster fragments and performed another Chaos Control, freezing Nicole to the spot. He sneered at her and kicked her directly into Sally, who was just starting to unfreeze from her Chaos Control. The two girls ended up sprawling on the ground on top of one another after Nicole crashed into Sally.

"We'll see about that." crowed Nyder "If nobody here has the information I require, I'll just have to find out using other methods of gathering information. Like maybe nose through your computer monitors in your laboratory in the city and see what information they store. For now, I'll take the three comrades I've knocked out and see what they know."

With that said, Nyder held his fist out and performed another Chaos Control. This one opened up a Chaos Portal that would obviously lead to the Martian ship. He called over to the Martian soldiers.

"Martians, grab the three Mobians that are knocked out and fall back to the ship!" yelled Count Nyder "We're trying the next stage of the plan!"

The Martian soldiers understood Nyder's order and they all ran off towards the Chaos Cluster as fast as their legs could carry them. They had had enough of the battle anyway so retreating never sounded so good to them. Nyder ran through first with the Martian soldiers filing in after them. Three Martians seized the unconscious Kiara, Scott and Charmy and they bolted straight through the portal. The Royal Fighters watched the Martians leave but they didn't try to stop them for they hadn't noticed they'd taken Scott, Kiara and Charmy with them so they just watched them run away through the portal. The Martians all vanished into thin air as they ran through the portal. Vector stuck his tongue out as the last Martian retreated through the portal.

"Yah boo, sucks to be you!" he taunted "You'd better run you cowards! We Mobians are just too tough for you peace-hating bigots!"

"I wouldn't sound too happy Vector." said Jessica in a strangely flat

tone of voice "I mean, the Martians put up a fierce battle and they seem to be very obstinate. Why would they suddenly retreat?"

"Isn't it obvious baby-face?" scoffed Taran "We kicked their asses out here! We've scared them off with our superior fighting skills!"

"I'm not entirely convinced we have." said Jessica grimly "I mean, they were battling too desperately out here for me to be convinced they'd suddenly retreat. Something's up here."

"I think I agree with Jessica." said Miranda "I mean, where's Kiara? She's gone all of the sudden."

"Scott isn't here either Miranda." noted Felix "He has disappeared too. How did that happen?"

Vector and Taran both looked around and surely enough, they noticed that Kiara and Scott were gone. This stunned the two of them. How did they not notice this immediately? And as a matter of facts, where did Scott and Kiara suddenly disappear to?

"Hey, they ARE gone!" blurted Vector "I guess we were so busy fighting, we didn't notice they were gone!"

"I think I can see why Jessica's feeling suspicious about all this, maybe the Martians retreated because they've got captives!" deduced Taran "I bet the Martians have got my little bro and the rookie!"

"They're not the only ones who are gone!" fretted Espio "Charmy's gone too! The Martians must have him as well!"

"What?! Charmy's gone too?!" shrieked Vector "Why those dirty little…when I get my hands on those Martians, I'm gonna break their skulls and make them pay for kidnapping Charmy, Kiara and Scott like this!"

"How did those freaks even get their hands on the three anyway?" asked a very confused Bolt "I mean, we had the dumbbells on the ropes! How did they even manage to nab them?"

"I know, right?" added Thunder who looked equally as confused

about all of these "I mean, if we were winning this battle, the Martians shouldn't have been able to kidnap any of us."

"I can tell you how it happened." put in Nicole, who had picked herself up and wandered over to the others "Nyder had some steel balls on him and I knocked him down onto the ground. He dropped the orbs and they zapped Scott, Kiara and Charmy into unconsciousness. The Martians must have grabbed them and taken them through the portal and back to their ship."

"That makes sense." said Espio "But what would the Martians want to kidnap any of us for anyway? I thought they wanted to kill us all."

"Nyder told me that he wants to find out the location of the Chaos Emeralds." explained Sally "No doubt Marik told him everything about the emeralds so he knows what they are. I fear he's going to torture them and get the information about their whereabouts that way."

"But Kiara and Scott don't know where the Chaos Emeralds are so they'll be torturing them for nothing!" cried Vector "Charmy does though for him, me and Espio have seen the Chaos Emeralds on Angel Island before and Knuckles has told us where he keeps them for in case we need to get them at all! The Martians will no doubt get poor, poor Charmy to crack easily! We've gotta save him before they can get the poor bee to squeal to them!"

"We have Silver's Super Warp Ring but we can't warp ourselves over to the Martian ship for I need to visualize the location the ship's in." noted Sally "I don't know what the Martian ship looks like so I can't just warp us onto the ship for I won't be able to visualize it in my head for the warp ring. I don't know where they've parked their ship either so I can't warp us over to the ship's location either. We're stuck I'm afraid."

"Then what the blooming heck can we do?!" cried Thunder "We can't just let our friends get tortured by Martians and get them to tell them where the Chaos Emeralds are! They'll cause chaos with those emeralds if they get their hands on them!"

"If only Sonic and the others were still here." sighed Bolt "They'd be

able to help us out here they would."

"No need to worry my worrying Mobians for I can provide you with the location of the Martian's ship!" crowed a voice that was all too familiar to them.

Everybody looked up into the sky and they saw that none other than Dr. Eggman was hovering above them in his Egg-Pod vehicle with his fem-bot assistant Katherine sitting beside him and looking down at the Mobians. Dr. Eggman was here to help the Mobians defeat the Martians and he would help marvellously by giving them the location of the Martian's ship. But would the Mobians trust him? And would he be able to convince them that he's on their side for this battle…?

Kiara was slowly beginning to come out of unconsciousness. She moaned groggily as she slowly began to wake up. Her eyes opened up bit by bit and everything was starting to come back to her. She began to remember what had happened to her. She was out on the battlefield taking down Martians and then suddenly she had been electrocuted and knocked out by something. She was soon about to find out where she had been taken for she was waking up. Her vision was blurred for the moment but Kiara blinked her eyes and cleared her vision up a bit.

"Oooh, where the hell did that shock come from…?" she slurred to herself in a mumble "Whatever it was…it was really painful…"

Kiara finished waking up and she observed her surroundings to see where she was. To her shock, she wasn't out on the battlefield like she was expecting to be, she was in a darkly lit room with a single light shining over her and the room had chains dangling from the ceiling, some horrible looking devices on the wall, a restraining bed and a computer screen with a helmet connected to it (that's the Visual Mind Reader Link just in case you've forgotten). Kiara gasped in horror. Where was she? How did she get here and why was she here? She also realized something else. Her arms had been raised over her head and her feet weren't touching the floor. She was dangling about 22 centimetres off the floor. Kiara looked up at her

raised arms only to find thick, metal chains were wrapped tightly around her wrists, keeping her arms up above her head and dangling her off the floor like she was now. Kiara's heart began to pound. She was chained up in a dark lit room. That could only mean one thing, she had been kidnapped by the Martians after being knocked out and taken onto their ship! Kiara was about to go mental with panic. As a child, she had a fear of aliens and being kidnapped by them and now, her childhood fears were coming true! She had been kidnapped by the Martians and was likely to experience torture beyond anything she could ever imagine! Kiara struggled in her chains madly, making them rattle loudly as she did so.

"Oh no, oh no, oh no!" shrieked Kiara, trying desperately to get free "This can't be happening, this can't be happening! Oh god, please don't let this be real! I must be having a nightmare, a freakish, terrifying nightmare! I'm a prisoner of the Martians! Please let this be a nightmare!"

"It's not a nightmare I'm afraid Kiara." said a voice she wasn't expecting to hear beside her "It's as real as real gets."

Kiara looked to her side and to her shock, saw that she wasn't alone in this dungeon. Scott Lynx was chained up beside her and on his other side, Charmy Bee was chained up beside him! They had woken up just before Kiara did and they were horrified to see that they were prisoners of the Martians all of the sudden. Scott and Charmy had tried to get free of their chains but to no avail. Even Scott's energy powers couldn't get him out of them for the chains were resistant to even mystical powers. All three Mobians were stuck in this prison and very likely, were going to be in here for a while. Kiara began to breathe very fast. She was clearly on the verge of having a panic-attack.

"Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my freaking gosh!" exclaimed Kiara "You two were kidnapped by the Martians as well!"

"Yeah, I can't tell you how much this sucks!" whined Charmy "And my wrists hurt, these chains are hurting them real badly!"

"We've tried all we can to get outta these chains but we can't break free." said Scott, clearly looking defeated "We're stuck in here I'm

afraid. I swear though if I ever get outta these chains, so help me I'll deck every last Martian there is!"

"Yeah, me too!" added Charmy "I bet Vector and Espio are gonna be really ticked off when they find out the Martians have kidnapped me!"

"Same goes for my team." said Scott "Jessica, Taran and Felix will make sure the Martians never see the light of day ever again once they realize I'm not with them!"

"Not that I mean to sound unhopeful or anything but, are you sure they'll even be able to find us?!" shrieked Kiara, getting into a panic right now "I mean, even WE don't know where we are! OK, we know we're obviously on the Martian ship but we don't know where the Martian ship is! We could be anywhere on Mobius now! Our friends will NEVER find us if they don't know where we are! Oh my god, this is terrible! We're prisoners of the Martians and they're likely going to inflict grievous pain on us or worse, perform horrifying experiments on us! And the worst part is, our friends will never find us in time to save us from all of this!"

She began to breathe very fast now. Kiara was having a panic-attack and she was having it badly. As courageous as the cheetah was, she was quite easily prone to panicking when anything starts going horribly wrong and she ends up in a situation like this, especially as it was like her childhood fears. Scott took pity on the cheetah and he decided to clam her down.

"Kiara, look at me." he ordered the panicking cheetah "Look at me!" he repeated again for Kiara didn't hear him the first time.

Kiara stopped panicking and she looked at Scott, her breathing still heavy and rapid.

"Clam down." said Scott "Things maybe bad at the moment but we can't lose all hope. Our friends will find us and save us. You know that as well as I do. If Sonic's always there to save his friends in a moment of need then I'm sure the others will be there too. We're Royal Fighters and we never ditch those in need as you remember. Trust me Kiara, we will be saved. We'll just have to hold on until

then."

Kiara seemed to calm down after Scott's comforting words. She began to breathe slower and slower and she was regaining control of herself.

"You know, for a hot-head, you sure know how to calm people down Scott." said Kiara.

"Well after a bad experience back home, I grew more level-headed and I've become more and more level-headed as time goes by." said Scott modestly "Jessica's really growing to love me more for that."

"Jessica's lucky to have a boy like you." said Kiara kindly "If we get outta here, I'll be sure to tell her that myself."

"Aw thanks." said Scott happily "I appreciate that. Now, while we're in here, we'll have to see if an opportunity to escape presents itself to us. After all, you never know what will happen while we're here."

"I hope we get outta here soon, my arms feel like they're going to break off!" whinged Charmy.

Then suddenly, the dungeon door opened up and in strolled Count Nyder. The sinister Martian in the split-cape clearly seemed delighted at the fact he had three captives in his parlour and he was looking forward to giving them a traditional Martian punishment. He strode up to the three captives and he sneered at them.

"You Mobians put up an admirable battle out there." he crowed "You all had the Martians on the run and yet I STILL managed to take home at least three of you."

"Let us go you freak in a cape!" yelled Kiara "If you don't then so help me you'll be sorry for all this!"

"My aren't we a little headstrong little girl?" sneered Nyder "We can't do with behaviour like that in here can we? I may have to dampen that spirit of yours."

"Don't you dare touch Kiara you big bully!" yelled Charmy "If you do,

I'll give you one nasty sting!"

"You touch Kiara, you deal with me!" threatened Scott "And believe me when I say I'm dangerous when I'm angry!"

"I can see that." snapped Nyder "And I do not care either. You're all in chains so your threats mean nothing to me. Now, I bet you're all wondering why you're here aren't you?"

"We are." muttered Kiara.

"Well you three, I've been tasked with finding the location of the so-called "Chaos Emeralds"." explained Nyder "I should hope you all know what they are."

"Of course we do." sniffed Scott "We've seen them get used before**during our battle with the Devatrons. Everybody in the R.F.S. has been told what the Chaos Emeralds are but not all of us know where they are. You're wasting your time with me freak, I don't know where they are."

"Me neither." said Kiara.

"And certainly not me!" lied Charmy.

"We'll see about that." said Count Nyder in a cold tone of voice "For we Martians have an ingenious invention known as the Visual Mind Reader Link." he continued, pointing at the computer screen and helmet at the other end of the room "With this device, we can display your minds visually on screen and we'll find out everything you know. So we'll see if you're all telling the truth or not."

"Go ahead." sniffed Scott "You're wasting time you know. None of us can tell you anything."

Scott had the idea that if Nyder used the so-called "Visual Mind Reader Link" on all three of them, one at a time, he'd buy the heroes enough time to rescue them all so he *wanted* Nyder to do it anyway. To his luck, that's exactly what Nyder was going to do anyway, use the Visual Mind Reader Link on all three captives, one at a time. That would hopefully buy the others some time to find them and rescue them. He just hoped that Nyder wouldn't find anything useful

in their minds for he knew he and Kiara had no idea where the Chaos Emeralds were but he had a feeling Charmy knew. As for Nyder, he strode over to a wall and he grabbed an electro-clamp, a terrible torture device the Martians were quite fond of using on their captives. It was a clamp on a long steel pole that clamped around the victim's waist and gave them a terrible electrical shock. The treacherous Rozarr had been executed by one of those after Zarondight exposed her as a traitor and attempted murderer to Diablo. Nyder was now going to use it on the three captives. The clamp opened up and Nyder inched it towards Kiara, making the cheetah squirm nervously for she had a feeling it wasn't going to be a good thing.

"I will go ahead and I will see if you can tell me anything or not." said Nyder "But first, I'm going to electrocute you all to the point of exhaustion. One: so that I can have the pleasure of torturing you filth-bags for mere fun and two: so that you will be too weak to resist me when I take you over to the machine and plug you in. We've had cases of that happening before, we release the victim so we can put them in the Mind Reader Link and they use that to their advantage and escape so I'm going to torture you so badly that you can't fight against me and attempt to escape."

"Oh no!" shrieked Kiara as the clamp fixed itself around her waist "Oh god, please, not torture! Anything but that! Please, don't do it!"

Nyder ignored the pleading cheetah and he activated the clamp's terrible power. The clamp electrocuted Kiara very violently and the cheetah writhed around violently in pain as she received this terrible torture. Her screams were loud enough to make the ceiling cave in on top of them. Scott and Charmy cringed as Kiara was tortured by Nyder. They'd be next after her. The only good thing about this was Nyder wasn't going to electrocute any of them to death. But once he'd used the Visual Mind Reader Link on them, he'd likely execute them once they were useless to him. The next few minutes were going to be sheer hell for the poor captives in Nyder's grasp. Hopefully, they would be saved by the others but they could only hope for that for it didn't seem likely they'd be arriving on the scene anytime soon…

Footnotes:

***He did indeed in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 113**

**** All the Royal Fighters witnessed Super Sonic vs. Super Shadow in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 115**

Oh dear, Count Nyder has captives and he's going to try and find out if they know where the Chaos Emeralds are kept! Will he find out or will the others save them in time? And what's Dr. Eggman going to do now he's involved in this madness? Tune in next time for part 3 of this midquel saga...

Divide and Conquer: The Home Front 3

Arc 17: Divide and Conquer: The Home Front

The Martian Invasion Midquel

Takes place during Stories 127-133 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 3: Save the Captives

"No need to worry my worrying Mobians for I can provide you with the location of the Martian's ship!" crowed a voice that was all too familiar to the Mobians as they worried on how they were going to save their captured comrades from the Martians.

The Royal Fighters were having one heck of a day right now. First the Martians all came to Mobius and invaded it*, then they all had a hectic battle which ended in the Martian ship being severely crippled and forcing the Martians to flee or they would lose it to the Mobians, then the Martians divided their resources and spread out across the planet to draw out the Royal Fighters and make them easier to pick off than before**, then Count Nyder, the only Martian left behind, snuck into the city and destroyed the shield generator and attempted to destroy New Mobotropolis and now he'd kidnapped three Royal Fighters, Charmy Bee from Team Chaotix, Scott the Lynx from Team Adabat and Kiara the Cheetah from Team Megapolis. He was going to use the ingenious Martian invention known as "The Visual Mind-Reader" link, a machine that could project a victim's thoughts in visual form on a computer screen on the machine, and see if any of them knew the location of the Chaos Emeralds. He'd been tasked with finding them and stealing them for the Martians for according to Marik, they had great power and could bring them total conquest. The Royal Fighters who had stayed behind to defend New Mobotropolis, consisting of Queen Sally Acorn, Nicole the Lynx, Vector the Crocodile, Espio the Chameleon, Miranda Mongoose, Kari the Rat, Thunder and Bolt the Chipmunks, Jessica the Cougar, Taran the Lynx and Felix the Peacock were wondering on how they

could save Charmy, Scott and Kiara given how they have a Super Warp Ring but have no idea where the Martian ship is and thus, cannot visualize the place and warp there and all of the sudden, a voice came from nowhere and surprised all of them. They looked up only to see Dr. Eggman, Mobius' sworn enemy, and his assistant Katherine were hovering above them in Eggman's Egg-Pod. The Egg-Pod descended down to the ground and touched down, the Mobians all glaring at Dr. Eggman disapprovingly, obviously not pleased to have him suddenly appearing on the scene. Dr. Eggman surprisingly enough kept his trademark evil grin on his face despite the glowers he was receiving from the Mobians. Sally stood forward, her hands on her hips and her face looking deathly serious.

"Ah Queen Sally Acorn, I love your new look." crooned Eggman, taking note of Sally's new outfit "It looks lovely on you and gives you a very adventurous look. Not often you see a queen of any kind dressed like that. One wouldn't even suspect you of being one if they saw you dressed like that."

"Thank you." said Sally sarcastically, not flattered in the slightest for only her friends were allowed to comment on her attire or appearance in anyway and she knew Eggman was likely being sarcastic "So Dr. Eggman, why the heck are you here and what do you want?"

"I'm so glad you asked me that my dear queen because I can explain that quite easily." said Dr. Eggman.

"No need to, we already know why you're here!" snarled Vector, bashing his fists together "You're here to attack us like you always are and you're here to roboticize us all, like you always are! Well I've got news for you Doc Egg, I've got a knuckle sandwich nicely prepared just for you if you don't…"

"Vector, please." said Sally, holding her arm up to stop the angry crocodile as he advanced towards Eggman menacingly with his teeth and fists clenched "Let Eggman explain himself first before you use him for stress relief."

"OK Queenie." said Vector, simmering down a bit.

"Thank you." said Sally "Now then Eggman, why are you here then?" she asked cautiously.

You never know what's going to happen when your greatest enemy shows up on your home turf and what he could possibly be here for or even be wanting for that matter. It was always best to be cautious when dealing with this kind of scenario. Dr. Eggman just smiled his usual wide smile of pure concentrated evil and he answered Sally's question.

"I am here to join you in your conflict with the Martians." explained Dr. Eggman "You see, I came here last year to conquer your world right? Well then how can I conquer the world if the Martians come here and wreck the place?"

"What a surprise, he comes to us to help us deal with a threat the same way he came to us during the Devatron invasion." sighed Miranda "And of course, our alliance will only last until the threat is dealt with."

"That is absolutely correct Miranda." sneered Eggman "Our alliance will expire with the Martian's defeat, same as our alliance against the Devatrons."

The Mobians sort of sighed in annoyance at Eggman, clearly getting fed up of this happening already.

"Is it just me, or is the fat idiot just plain repetitive nowadays?" asked Bolt, visibly annoyed by all of this.

"I'll say he is." muttered Thunder, also visibly annoyed by all of this "We fight him and then suddenly when someone scarier, uglier and more threatening than him comes, he wants to join us. If only he'd stay good once he joins up with us, that would be wonderful for us all."

"I couldn't agree more with that." said Sally, surprised to hear herself saying that to Thunder "So Eggman, however did you come to know about the Martian invasion? Given that you're in hiding, news must be hard to come across mustn't it?"

"Indeed it is." said Dr. Eggman "Which is why I took the liberty of having my glorious assistant bot Katherine," he patted her on the head as he said her name "Hack into your satellites and radios so I know what's going on above surface while I'm hiding and preparing to make my move once again. She intercepted your planet's radio signals and picked up all the cries for help being sent around and even a broadcast in Soleanna where Marik himself made an announcement. That's how I came to know of the invasion."

This dark revelation made everybody gasp in shock.

"Katherine hacked into Mobius' satellites and radios?!" shrieked Sally.

"Oooh, that does it, you're going down for that!" growled Vector "Hey toots, let me at him!"

"Not now Vector, stand down." ordered Sally, her face a cold, dry expression as she glowered at Eggman.

Vector reluctantly did as he was told. He was so itching to deck Dr. Eggman right now given how frustrated he was beginning to get with him. But Vector knew he had to do what he was told so he kept back, his scowl still fixed on Eggman. Sally put her hands on her hips and fixed Eggman a stern glare.

"So I guess Katherine hacking into Mobius' satellites and radios helped you to work out that the Martians had invaded Mobius and are planning to destroy it?" she asked.

"Indeed so my dear queen." said Dr. Eggman "Katherine got to hacking into your satellites and radios after the whole Black Arms deal***and it took her a few hours to finally get into them all. She is the best hacker ever designed and all built by my own genius hands too." he added with a deep sense of pride in his voice "So you can imagine thanks to all that, I'll know your every move before you make it."

"Yes you will and that is precisely why we **decline** your offer for an alliance." said Sally crossly.

The others seemed a little surprised at that statement, even Dr. Eggman. The gluttonous scientist was lost for words for a minute.

"B-b-but Sally, you need me!" blurted Dr. Eggman "I-I-I find out where the M-Martian ship is! I can tell you where you need to go in order to warp over there with a warp ring!"

"You may tell us where the Martian ship is, but you will NOT join us in this battle!" said Sally sternly "Now you've hacked into our satellites and radios, why the hell should we trust you?!" she demanded "Not to mention, why should we let you join us anyway? All you'll do is double-cross us once the bigger threat is dealt with!"

"You should let me join because my contribution will guarantee that you defeat the Martians!" retorted Dr. Eggman "Need I remind you that I have Devion, **the Devatron leader himself** on my side?! With him, the Martians are as good as defeated! You can't possibly refuse an opportunity like this!"

"If you want to stop the Martians than do it yourself if you so wish!" snapped Sally, pointing sharply at Dr. Eggman "You don't need us to fight the Martians as well! Now tell us where the Martian ship is before I get you arrested and locked away Eggman!"

"If you refuse my alliance than I won't tell you where the Martian ship is." said Dr. Eggman "Simple as that."

"Fine, we'll find it ourselves." said Sally in a huff "Now leave here at once before things get more unpleasant for you."

Dr. Eggman was outraged at this. He was making a good offer for the Mobians and they refuse him and order him to leave?! Well, he would show them a thing or two! He had just the thing to get the Mobians to change their mind and he was going to get to it the moment he gets home. Dr. Eggman scowled at Dr. Eggman, his glare hidden by his glasses and his moustache twitching furiously.

"Fine then you ungrateful little brat!" snarled Eggman "If you don't want my help then I shan't give you any! Just don't come crying to me when that Martian ship gets going again all because you couldn't find it and destroy it! I'd also like to let you know that I have sent

robots to the exact same locations Sonic and friends have been sent to give them a hand in fighting the Martians. Perhaps they will be more grateful for my help then you are!"

With that said, Dr. Eggman left in a huff. The Egg-Pod hovered up into the air and flew away from the Royal Fighters at a slow and steady pace. Sally just watched the pod leave with her face contorting with loathing and she turned her back on the departing doctor, not wishing to see him a minute longer. The other Royal Fighters began conversing with each other the moment Eggman left.

"Eggman's sent robots out to help Sonic and the others?" mused Espio the Chameleon "Unusually selfless of him, even if it is for his own needs rather than our own."

"So what, can we expect a bunch of Eggman robots to suddenly show up and help out Sonic, Tails, Wilson, Mandy, Knuckles, Shade, Bunnie, Geoffrey, Ruben, Amy, Cream, Cosmo, Shadow, Rouge, Silver and Blaze while they're all fighting the Martians?" asked Taran the Lynx "Mind you, I bet they'll defeat the Martians before the Eggman robots even arrive so they won't be of much help in the grand scheme of things."

"Maybe or maybe not, we don't know until those guys come home." noted Vector "As for Eggman joining us, am I the only one who thinks Sally rejecting him was a dumb move?"

"I most certainly acquiesce with you on this subject matter at hand Vector." said Felix the Peacock "Eggman was most willing to provide us with information regarding the location of the Martian's ship, their very place of refuge and it is perceptibly obvious that they have taken our captured friends back there. Eggman would have apprised us on their whereabouts already but Sally denied him and thus, shot down our chance at finding and rescuing our friends."

"I can't stand the very thought of my gorgeous boyfriend being tortured by those demented demons!" shrieked Jessica worriedly "And I feel afraid for Charmy and Kiara too for they're Royal Fighters and friends too! I'm desperate to save them from those Martians before they harm them!"

"So am I dear Jessica." said Miranda sympathetically, feeling the same way as Jessica right now "But sadly, we don't know where the Martians are and Eggman was going to tell us that so we could save Scott, Charmy and Kiara but Sally rejected him. I feel that the Queen of New Mobotropolis has made a grave mistake."

Sally's face fell hearing Miranda say that about her. That really made her feel bad right now. She had rejected Eggman for the fact he'd hacked into their satellites and radios and was now at an advantage over them in the main conflict and yet, he could have helped them save their friends by telling them where the Martian ship was located so they could use Silver's Super Warp Ring to warp over to the ship and break in. Sally began to think maybe she had made a foolish choice after all. And yet…Eggman hacking into Mobius' satellites had given the queen squirrel…an idea of some sorts. An idea that would make up for this mistake of hers… as Sally thought to herself, Nicole walked up to her and put her hands on her shoulders.

"Sally, please reconsider your decision." she said "Like the others, I believe that rejecting Eggman's offer as a bad idea. He could really help us out in this battle right now and you've refused him. We have comrades to save and he could help us with that."

"I know Nicole and I regret my decision." said Sally grimly "But I have an idea that'll make up for it. An idea that proves we won't need Eggman after all."

"Really?" piped Nicole "What's that idea of yours then?"

The Royal Fighters all looked at Sally at the mere mention of the word "idea" and they began to wonder what she was going to say. Sally smiled brightly at her comrades and she spoke to them.

"My idea is this: you know that Eggman has access to our satellites thanks to Katherine hacking them?" asked Sally "Well we can access the satellites ourselves with the computers back in Royal HQ. All it will take is a little bit of hacking and we will have satellite feed from every satellite around the world. One of them is BOUND to pick up the Martian ship somewhere on Mobius. We'll find the ship that way."

The Royal Fighters all gave off a chorus of impressed "Ooohs" at that idea.

"Your majesty, that's a great idea." said Espio "I'll give you a hand in the hacking process, I'm good at hacking. I'll never forget the day I hacked into the Region of Rebellious Reptile's ship and brought it down to the ground."

"Neither will I, that was awesome!" beamed Vector, grinning happily at the very memory of that day.

"Thank you Espio." said Sally "So than Royal Fighters, its back to Royal HQ for us. Let's get ourselves some satellite feed and find that Martian ship!"

With that said, the Royal Fighters eagerly ran off back to Royal HQ to get to Sally's plan. The only problem was, it wasn't going to work and the reason behind that would be because of the very person they had rejected and you're about to see why as we go on in this story…

Back in the Martian ship, Count Nyder had just finished giving his prisoners some electro-torture just to weaken them and render them incapable of resisting him once he let them down and took them over to the Visual Mind Reader Link. Scott, Charmy and Kiara had been electrocuted by Nyder's electro-clamp all the time the Royal Fighters and Eggman had spent talking to each other and they all began to feel terrible right now. The shocks they'd received had been dreadful due to the high voltage in the electro clamp and Nyder had shocked them at least three times, giving them one minute each (so in total, he shocked each captive for three minutes and spent about nine minutes just doing that to them! Three minutes per captive!) and they all felt limp and lame. Not helped by the fact they were hanging off the ground by chains around their wrists so not only did their torsos hurt, their arms hurt too. Their heads drooped down and they moaned groggily. The torture had been pretty bad for the electro-clamp was a pretty serious torture device and at the moment, the captives felt like just staying awake was hard work. Nyder just grinned at them, clearly pleased with himself at what he

had done to the captives. He put the electro-clamp away and decided to crow at his victims (you know, because the Martians haven't done enough of that already!). He stood before the three tortured captives with his face a twisted smile of pure deviousness and his eyes narrowed to evil, gloating slits that would make any villain proud.

"So you three miserable Mobians, did you enjoy that little "shock therapy" session I put you all through?" sneered Nyder.

Kiara opened one eye, grunting heavily as she prepared to speak. She looked so badly hurt by the whole session that just talking seemed to be a difficult job for her.

"Do…you…really…cough, cough, cough…think…we…enjoyed… gasp…that?!" snapped Kiara weakly, her voice a hoarse whisper of pain.

"In case you didn't realize you stupid little girl, I asked a rhetorical question." retorted Nyder "You didn't have to answer it you know."

"Sorry…" grumbled Kiara.

"Now then, now you three are all nicely tortured and in no condition to fight against me, I shall put one of you in the Visual Mind-Reader Link and see what information I can find." crowed Count Nyder "So who wants to go first out of you three then?"

"Can…we…say…nobody?" asked Charmy dimly. He was feeling a little dim at the moment due to how badly hurt he was.

"Of course not." said Nyder "So who wants to go first? Or do I get to pick which one goes first?"

"I'll…go first…" grunted Scott, trying his best to fully open his eyes but strength wasn't with him right now given what he had just gone through so he could only open them in a slight squint "Let's…just get…this…over…cough, cough…with…" he croaked.

Nyder was pretty surprised at this. Usually when the Martians had multiple captives and were going to use the Visual Mind-Reader Link on them, they would either fight about going first or at the most, not

offer whatsoever and leave it up to the Martians to decide. He was also surprised at Scott's "Let's get this over with" line. It was like he WANTED to do this or something, very unusual for a captive indeed. Most captives would be against the idea of having their mind read by a machine of theirs. That was only because Scott knew he couldn't give Nyder any useful information and was just going to end up wasting his time with him. That and Scott had the idea of having Nyder go through them all in an attempt to buy the others more time to find them and rescue them so Scott was all for going for it. Nyder didn't know this of course and he shook off his surprise, happy to see that for once, a victim was being more co-operative and just going for it instead of wasting time like past victims did. Nyder strode up to Scott.

"Very well kid, you can go first." he said "I hope you're ready for this, you may not enjoy the experience very much."

"What…ever…" grumbled Scott "Just…get…on with…it…already!"

Now that REALLY surprised Nyder. The lynx in the blue shorts really WAS wanting to do this wasn't he?! The Mobians really were unusual weren't they? Much different compared to other victims they had massacred in the past. Nevertheless, Nyder was all too happy to abide to Scott's order. He turned away from his prisoners and strode over to the wall. He pressed a button on the wall and Scott's chains began to lower him down to the floor. His feet were now back on the floor and the chains kept descending so he was able to lower his arms but due to how weakened he was from the torture session, he slumped on the floor like a tired old bear. Scott felt relieved that he was down on the floor and his arms were down at last but he knew that he wasn't going to be free for long. Nyder strode over to Scott and unwrapped the chains from around Scott's wrists. Kiara and Charmy looked at Scott, wishing that they would be let down too for their arms were seriously killing them right now. Nyder then scooped up the poor lynx and carried him over to the Visual Mind-Reader Link. He placed Scott on the bed and strapped him to it. Straps were fixed firmly around Scott's wrists and ankles and the tortured lynx didn't even attempt to break free of them for he knew resistance was futile and his weakened state wouldn't let him resist the Count anyway. Nyder made sure the straps were secured nice

and tightly before getting the helmet. Scott just lay there and allowed the Count to do his job. Nyder placed the helmet on Scott's head and it zapped him into unconsciousness. Scott lay there unconscious on the bed with the Mind-Reader helmet perched on his head. Now Scott was knocked out, Nyder switched the machine on and the screen began to fuzz up as it booted up. It had been fixed after malfunctioning during Sycranna's failed attempt to find out where the Seedrian children had been evacuated to but it still took a while to boot up. Kiara and Charmy watched helplessly as the machine was put into action. They began to wonder how the whole process was going to work. Was the helmet going to simply read Scott's mind and display his thoughts on the screen it was connected to? Guess that's why it was called the "Visual Mind-Reader Link". Nyder looked at the screen intently as it displayed Scott's memories and thoughts on the screen. The screen flashed brightly and Nyder watched as various memories from the various days gone by in Scott's life began to play. The first memory that was playing was the day Scott was born. Nyder instantly fast forwarded the footage and moved onto another memory the Mind-Reader Link was displaying on screen. He fast-forwarded through much of Scott's childhood, including the day he and Jessica first met and the day he and Jessica first got their powers after touching the Sceptre of Fates and even through the day they moved away from their village and to another village to escape the bullying that had driven them to wonder if their powers were really a gift or not. He knew that all of the childhood memories would be of no use to him so he needed to see the memories of his older years and memories of his current life right now. Nyder stopped fast-forwarding the footage and he came to the very day Scott and Jessica first met Bunnie Rabbot and Geoffrey St. John. He watched that one all the way from them meeting Geoffrey to Ravage being chased off and Jessica fixing Bunnie's arm before moving onto the next memory. Kiara and Charmy couldn't really see what Nyder was watching for Nyder was in the way of the screen (the screen's quite small so one person can easily stand in front of it and block anyone else from seeing it) but they could hear what Nyder was watching for the audio was on and from what they were hearing, it sounded like Scott and Jessica had quite the first meeting with a couple of Royal Fighters. No wonder they had been inspired to become Royal Fighters themselves. Nyder fumed to himself as he moved onto the next memory.

"The boy's got a head full of nothing." he muttered "One would think a person of his nature would have more interesting memories to look at."

He moved onto the day Scott and Jessica signed up to become Royal Fighters and were shipped to Downunda to have their training. He watched that one intently to see if he could find what he was looking for as it looked promising. He watched it all the way through from the first training session to Ravage destroying Scott and Jessica's village in Adabat. He was pretty pleased to be watching that, especially as he got to hear Scott rave about it angrily. He enjoyed seeing people disdained about something. Hearing them sob, cry, moan, rant and rave and all that stuff really made him happy for some sick reason (he's a Martian, of course he's sick!). Kiara and Charmy could work out what Nyder was watching by the audio and dialogue being recited from the memories the Visual-Mind Reader Link was displaying on screen for him and they began to feel sorry for Scott, finding out what had happened to his village and all. They hoped that things were going better for Scott back in Adabat now. Nyder then continued to watch the footage all through to Ravage's defeat and subsequent retreat. He quite liked how Scott failed to catch him again after he fled for it. Nyder then watched some more footage that bore nothing of interest and he fast-forwarded to the time the Devatrons invaded and the Royal Fighters all joined up in fighting them. He was quite interested in seeing how the Mobians defeated the Devatrons given their claims of doing so, so he watched on. A good few minutes past as he watched the Devatron invasion from Scott's point of view, especially the attempt to stop Triton and Steelor from stealing any lava from MountAdabat, he finished with that and moved on. He ended up coming to the current events that were going on now. Nyder turned the machine off, scowling to himself. All he ended up finding out was some things that happened to Scott and how the Mobians defeated the Devatrons. No information of any kind had been revealed to him. He yanked the helmet off of Scott's head, waking the lynx up and he put it beside the machine. A good few minutes had been spent watching some of the stuff he watched while Scott was being mind-read and he had found out NOTHING. Looks like Scott was right to tell him he didn't know anything about the Chaos Emeralds.

"You haven't got the information I require." fumed Nyder "You were a waste of time."

"I…knew…I was…going to…be…" croaked Scott smugly.

"Well then, I'll just have to try another prisoner." said Nyder "I think the girl can go next. I hope she has anything of interest."

With that said, Nyder un-strapped Scott from the bed and he carried him back over to Kiara and Charmy. Nyder chained him back up and he rose the lynx back off the floor just as before. Scott was back to dangling off the floor by his arms as he was before the mind-reading process. Just when his arms were beginning to feel better too.

"So…what did…he…see…while…I was…being mind read?" asked Scott weakly.

"Just…the day you first…met…a Royal…Fighter and…other… events like…your village being…destroyed and…your side of the… Devatron invasion…" croaked Kiara.

"We're…so…sorry to…find out…about that…" said Charmy "I bet… that was awful…losing your…village like that…to some evil…wolf guy named Ravage…"

"Yeah…it was awful…" muttered Scott "But…my village is…being rebuilt…it's far from completion…though but it'll…be back…to the way…it was before…it was…blown up…sooner or…later…cough, cough, cough!" he finished with a hoarse, throaty cough that made it sound like his chest hurt. He was still feeling horrible from the torture session earlier.

"That's good." said Kiara as Nyder pressed a button on the wall and lowered her down onto the ground "I…hope your…village gets… rebuilt soon."

Scott smiled appreciatively. Kiara was just as lovely as Jessica was. He had a feeling he and Kiara were going to be very good friends at the end of the day. As for Kiara, she slumped on the floor as the chains lowered her and her arms down onto the ground and Nyder unchained her. He took Kiara over to the Visual Mind-Reader Link

and strapped her in. Kiara just fumed at him.

"Is this…really necessary…?...ugh…" grunted Kiara.

"We Martians always restrain the victim that's being mind read to keep them still as we put the helmet on." explained Nyder "Now let's see what information I can get from you sweetheart."

He put the helmet on Kiara's head, the helmet zapping her into unconsciousness as it was placed upon her and Nyder switched the machine back on. Scott may have yielded no important information for him but Kiara might do. He'd find out soon though for the footage was beginning to roll on the screen…

Back at New Mobotropolis, the Royal Fighters had all run back into the city (which as a result of the tank attacks earlier now had a cracked ring wall and the gates had nearly been broken down from the heavy fire) and all piled into Royal HQ. Thomas Tiger, who was in the headquarters already given how he had no use out in the battlefield and Royal HQ was the best place for him to be now, was briefed in on everything the moment everybody ran into Royal HQ and he was horrified to hear that Kiara had been kidnapped by the Martians. Kari the Rat, who had just fixed the shield generator and got it up and working again, was also briefed in on everything that had happened and was horrified to hear all this. Everybody ran into the lab and Espio sat down at the computer monitors so he could get to work on accessing the satellites and seeing if he could find the Martian ship. Espio began tapping a few keys the moment he sat down and he stared directly at the screen. Everybody stood behind him, watching and waiting to see how he would fare in this.

"Right, this shouldn't be too hard." said Espio "I've managed to access the satellites during the Black Arms fiasco and monitor the Royal Fighters from here while me, Vector and Charmy were keeping Sonic company so I know what I'm doing easily."

"If you've done this before than we'll get all of this done in no time." said Sally brightly "Mobius has about six satellites in orbit currently so one of them is bound to pick up the location of the Martian ship

somewhere. There's nothing that none of our satellites won't see."

"I just hope Eggman hasn't done anything to the satellites now his assistant Katherine has hacked into them." muttered Espio "I've got the sneakiest suspicion that Katherine might have done something after hacking into the satellites. Maybe uploaded something into the systems to make her immune of being counter-hacked."

"I don't think Katherine's that sophisticated and capable." suggested Nicole "And I'm pretty sure Eggman didn't even think of that so there's nothing to worry about."

Espio hoped Nicole was right as he tapped some keys and began to open up the access files to the satellites in orbit all around Mobius…

Unfortunately though, Nicole was wrong, horribly, HORRIBLY wrong about the whole thing. Back in Megapolis, Dr. Eggman and Katherine had retreated back to Eggman's underground bunker and Dr. Eggman had sprung into action almost as quickly as the Mobians had. He was sitting down at his computer monitors and Katherine was primed and ready for the operation. A radio antenna had extended up from her head and a satellite dish had telescoped up from behind her back. Dr. Eggman was taping keys on his keyboard and he got up something on the screen. It was the satellite's data banks. The satellites and their feed were all his now thanks to Katherine hacking into them and he was putting everything in his power to make sure that the Mobians couldn't access them. You see, his plan was to prevent the Mobians from using the satellites to find out where the Martians are and force them to accept his alliance to join them in the conflict. Nobody says no to Dr. Eggman and gets away with it after all. He wanted to join the Mobians in this conflict to both make sure they defeat the Martians and to make sure he doesn't lose to them since it was very likely he was going to fall to the Martians. If mere animals can destroy his greatest inventions then what chance did he have against the Mobians on his own? That's why he wanted to make the alliance and he was going to make the Mobians accept his offer if it was the last thing he did. As for Katherine, she had accessed the satellites like Dr. Eggman had and she was uploading a virus into the

satellites to block any other access other than Eggman's and her own to them. The virus cannot be hacked into and once it was uploaded, nobody was getting into the satellites, no matter how skilled they were in computers and machinery. Even Tails wouldn't be able to hack through the virus and get to the satellites. Dr. Eggman was buying Katherine some time by uploading some complex codes into the systems to slow the Mobians down in their accessing process while Katherine finished uploading the virus. The virus was half finished and Katherine needed some more precious minutes before it was finished. Eggman uploaded a few bypass codes into the satellites while Katherine was uploading the rest of the virus. Eggman was sweating with effort but he was still grinning to himself as he uploaded another bypass code into the satellite's systems.

"Whew, this is definitely hard work but it's going to be worth it in the end! How's that virus coming along?" asked Dr. Eggman.

Katherine displayed the process of the upload. It was 70% complete. It was almost done. Eggman beamed happily.

"Excellent stuff Katherine!" cried Dr. Eggman "Keep at it, you're almost there!"

With that said, he added in another code to the satellites. This was pretty much a test of how fast one can make a satellite immune to hacking and Eggman was going to win easily for he was a genius and his technology would be harder to get through for the Mobians weren't used to it…

Back in Royal HQ, Espio just managed to get to the access area for the satellites and he tapped a few keys on the keyboard. Everybody was watching intently and everything seemed to be going well for the moment. Espio seemed to be having an easy enough time getting into the satellites. He was just bypassing the access codes for the satellite (the actual ones, not the ones Dr. Eggman uploaded) and soon he'd be in.

"Ok, I'm almost in everybody. Just a bit of processing to go and I'll

be completely in the satellites." said Espio "Just a few more seconds and…done!" he cried as the computer screen flashed and let him now he was done.

"Looks like Katherine didn't do anything after all, we're in." said Nicole brightly, breathing a sigh of relief.

"Wait a minute…" said Espio as something came up on the screen and took him by surprise "What in the world…?"

"What's up Espio buddy?" asked Vector "I thought you've gotten in."

"I thought I did too." muttered Espio "But another set of codes has just come up. And they look quite unusual."

Everybody looked at the screen and surely enough, they saw a new set of codes had just randomly popped up on the screen and they looked a little different from the ones Espio had just bypassed. The display bars on the screen with the codes in them were red instead of green like the codes for the satellites are and the numbers were in a different font to the actual codes Espio had just gotten through. Sally frowned at the screen.

"What's going on? I thought you bypassed the access codes for the satellites. Why is there another set of codes?" asked Sally.

"Did this happen when you accessed them during the Black Arms invasion?" asked Nicole, dreading to think on what Espio's answer was going to be.

"No." said Espio "They never came up the first time. Something's going on here and I think I can guess."

"I bet Eggman's trying to prevent us from getting into the satellites." muttered Sally "I bet those codes are his and he's uploading them to try and stop us from gaining access to the satellites."

"That would be the most logical scenario." said Thomas gravely "If Eggman has access to our satellites then he can do as he pleases with them and upload whatever he can into them. I fear that he's out to make sure we cannot access them and find the Martian ship with them."

"Why he'd be doing this I don't know." grumbled Sally "But he's not stopping us anytime soon. Espio, can you hack through Eggman's codes?"

"I'm trying right now." said Espio, tapping some keys on the keyboard.

He began trying to break through Eggman's codes that he had uploaded to the satellite. Unfortunately though, Espio couldn't quite comprehend the complicated algorithm structure of the codes and they were proving problematic when trying to decode them. Espio tried as hard as he could but he just couldn't quite comprehend the sequence of the codes and how to decode them.

"Ugh, I can't work this out!" cried Espio "The code's too sophisticated and problematic for me to get through!"

"Let me and Nicole try, we're good at complex coding." offered Sally "I'm sure we can get through them easily."

With that said, Espio happily relinquished the controls to Sally and Nicole. He got up from the seat and stood beside Vector while Sally sat down at the computer screen and she tapped some keys on the computer. She was having an easier time understanding the complexity of the codes than Espio was and she was beginning to decode them nice and steadily. Nicole stood by Sally's side, suggesting what methods they could use and how they could crack the code as Sally began decoding the codes. The girl's combined efforts managed to break through the first code in a matter of seconds but there were more codes to get through yet. Eggman had uploaded quite a lot of new codes already so Sally and Nicole had more to get through than just the one they've done so far. Sally and Nicole just sat there decoding the next set of codes and within seconds, they had broken through and were onto the next. Sally and Nicole decoded that set of codes and moved onto the next and the next and the next. They had gotten through seven codes in a couple of minutes and they were still not done yet. As Sally began to decode the eighth set of codes, she groaned to herself.

"How many codes has Eggman uploaded to this damn thing?!" she grumbled "We're on our eight code and I have a feeling there's still

more to go! Eggman's really trying hard to make sure we can't get into the satellites isn't he?"

"We can beat him Sally, don't worry about Eggman, we'll beat him at his own game!" declared Nicole "Keep at it, we'll win eventually!"

Sally smiled at Nicole and she continued working on decoding the codes. She and Nicole broke through another three codes in a couple of minutes and were now on the twelfth code. Luckily for them, Eggman had run out of codes to upload to the satellites so they were almost done getting through them all. Unfortunately… Katherine had finished uploading the virus to the satellites! Eggman had won this little battle for the control of the satellites! Sally and Nicole broke through the last few codes that Eggman had managed to upload before running out only to get a screen with the Eggman Empire's logo on it and big flashing words saying "Access Denied". Everybody gasped at the sight of that, Sally and Nicole's gasps being the loudest of them all.

"Oh no, we've gotten through all the codes and it's denying our access!" cried Sally "I think Eggman's blocked us fully from accessing the satellites!"

"We've gotta get into them and fast!" exclaimed Nicole "We need to access those satellites or we'll never find the location of the Martian ship!"

Sally tried a few things. She tapped some keys to see if anything would happen but nothing did. She pressed whatever she could on the keyboard but try as she might, she couldn't get into the satellites at all. Katherine's virus had blocked her for good and there was no getting into them. Sally thumped the keyboard in frustration.

"Urgh, the fat man's done it! He's completely blocked all access to the satellites! We can't get in!" moaned Sally angrily "Oooh I'm so mad at him right now I could just punch him in the face!"

The Mobians all looked at each other in horror.

"We can't get in?!" shrieked Vector.

"That is most unfortunate." sighed Felix in annoyance "The fat man has denied us access to our own satellites! We're stuck now!"

"No!" wailed Jessica, her eyes beginning to well up "How can we save my boyfriend, Kiara and Charmy now if we can't use the satellites to find the Martians?!"

"What can we do your majesty?" asked Miranda frantically "We need to find the Martian ship or we can't warp over there with Silver's Warp Ring!"

Sally groaned a very loud, angry, frustrated groan of fury and she put her head in her hands, gripping it tightly as if she was having a splitting headache all of the sudden. Nicole patted her friend affectionately on the back.

"There, there Sally, we did our best." said Nicole softly "I'm sorry that we didn't succeed."

"No need to be Nicole." said Sally, her head still in her hands "As for the solution to our problem, it's obvious on what we're going to have to do…" she added, her face as grave as anything.

"I think I know what you mean Sally." said Nicole "We're going to have to accept Eggman's offer and let him join us. He did say if we accepted his offer, he'd tell us where the ship is."

"I bet that's what the fat man was up to!" grumbled Taran, punching the wall in fury "He did all this just so he could force us to make peace with him! I bet though with all that time he's wasted, my little bother's being tortured horribly by those Martian freaks! It makes me shudder just to think what they're doing to poor Scotty right now! Same goes to the others!"

"This is all my fault." sighed Sally furiously "Had I not been so short-sighted and stubborn, I would have accepted Eggman's offer and we'd be ON the sodding ship already. Instead, I've wasted our valuable time and the Martians are likely already doing terrible things to Scott, Kiara and Charmy just to get them to talk and reveal the location of the Chaos Emeralds."

"Scott and Kiara will just be getting tortured over nothing for they don't know where the Chaos Emeralds are." said Espio grimly "Whereas Charmy, while he hasn't seen where the Chaos Emeralds are kept, he knows they're in Angel Island and he has seen the Master Emerald, the biggest Chaos Emerald of all, and I bet Nyder will get him to talk about that. All he has to do is get Charmy to tell him "They're in a place called AngelIsland" and that'll be all he needs."

"I hope Nyder hasn't gotten them to talk already." shuddered Sally "Well, let's not waste anymore time than we already have. Let's call Eggman and make the alliance we SHOULD have made in the first place…"

With that said, she switched off the access screens and set to contacting Dr. Eggman. Sally felt really bad right now for wasting all this time and being so obstinate. True Eggman may have done something drastically bad but surely accepting is offer wouldn't have been that hard. Besides, they could probably see to getting Katherine out of Mobius' satellites and radios and thus, make Eggman unable to hear and monitor their every move as he so wishes. Sally waited for a moment until Eggman picked up and his face projected on the screen of Royal HQ's computers.

"Hello, who is it?" asked Dr. Eggman, his face as smug as the most conceited of people.

"It's Queen Sally Acorn and I've got something to say…" said Sally, her face as cold as ice as she glowered at the fact doctor that was displayed on the computer screen right now…

Meanwhile, Count Nyder had been watching all of Kiara's memories on the Visual-Mind Reader Link and to his disappointment, he had found nothing at all. The only enjoyment he got out of the whole thing was seeing a tragic event in Kiara's life that surprised Scott and Charmy and made them feel for the cheetah. But that is a story for another time…As is, Count Nyder wasn't pleased to see that Kiara too had no information of use for him. He yanked the helmet off of Kiara's head, the cheetah waking up groggily as it was

removed from her head, and he put it beside the machine. He jammed his face into Kiara's face crossly.

"You were a waste of time as well!" he moaned "You did not have the information I required! One would think a woman with a will as strong as yours would have yielded some kind of information that would be useful to me!"

"Can I…help it…if I…don't know where…the Chaos…Emeralds are?!" snapped Kiara weakly "It's…not…my fault that…that…I don't…have what…you're looking…for!"

She then proceeded to spit directly in Nyder's eye just to get on his nerves. Nyder growled furiously and he wiped the spit out of his eye. He roared at the top of his voice and he walloped Kiara across the face as hard as he could. His metal gloves made the smack even more painful for poor Kiara. That smack was so hard that Kiara began bleeding from the side of her lip. She groaned in pain and Scott and Charmy winced, clearly thinking "Oooh, that's gotta hurt!" as they watched Nyder do that to the poor cheetah. Nyder un-strapped Kiara from the restraint bed and he hauled her up onto her feet by grabbing her hair and hoisting her up. Kiara winced in pain as her scalp began searing with pain.

"Ow, ow, ow! Don't…pull my…hair you…freak!" squealed Kiara, a tear of pain coming to her eye.

"You are in no position to call me a "freak" you insolent girl!" snarled Nyder "And you had better curb your insolence before I rip your organs out with my bare hands! You're vexing me enough as it is, do not vex me anymore!"

"So sorry…Count No-Heart!" snapped Kiara rudely.

"It's Count NY-DER, not "No-Heart" you stupid little girl!" snapped Nyder.

With that said, he dragged Kiara back over to the others by her hair and he threw her down onto the floor as roughly as he could. Scott instantly got angry and decided to tell Nyder off.

"Oy, stop…being mean…to poor Kiara…or I will…smash your…face in!" snarled Scott.

Nyder ignored him and he chained Kiara back up. He ran over to the wall and pressed a button that lifted the chains up, pulling Kiara's arms up over her head once again and they pulled her up off the floor just like before. She was back to dangling off the floor by her wrists again and the pain that was starting to die away quickly began to come back as the chains dug into her wrists. Kiara grunted in pain.

"Ugh…and just…when my…arms were…beginning to…feel better!" whined Kiara "Ow…this hurts!"

"I wish…this nightmare…would end already!" wailed Charmy "I… can't stand…this anymore!"

"This "nightmare" is about to get worse for you little boy for you're next." said Nyder coldly, pressing a button that lowered Charmy down to the floor "And you had better have the information I require or else."

Charmy was lowered down to the floor and Nyder unwrapped the chains from around his wrists. Charmy was glad to be down at last but he couldn't relax yet since he was being put in the dreaded Visual Mind-Reader Link. Nyder picked the bee up and he carried him over to the Visual Mind-Reader Link. He put Charmy down on the restraint bed but he couldn't strap him in for he was too small and thus, didn't reach the restraints. Instead, Nyder just took Charmy's helmet off of his head and put the Mind-Reader Link helmet on his head in its place. Charmy was zapped into unconsciousness by the helmet and Nyder switched on the Visual Mind-Reader Link. He watched intently as Charmy's memories began to project onto the screen. He had a feeling he wouldn't have much to look through since Charmy was only six years old which meant he would be spending less time on this. Scott and Kiara looked at each other worriedly.

"Do you…think Charmy…will have…the information he…requires?" asked Kiara worriedly "I'm really…worried…on whether…he will…or not…"

"I…have a…horrible feeling…he does…" croaked Scott "For…he and…his mates…have been…with Sonic and…his friends…quite a lot…cough, cough…these…next few minutes…are gonna be tense…that's for sure…"

Kiara nodded agreeably. They could do nothing but watch and wait as Nyder watched Charmy's memories being projected onto the screen of the Visual Mind-Reader Link. Nyder was about to find out what he wanted for Charmy had the information he required and nothing was going to stop him from getting it…

But an unlikely saviour was coming the Martian ship's way right now. And that unlikely saviour, or should I say "saviour **s** " are Shadow the Hedgehog and Rouge the Bat. They had just recently defeated the magnetic-hammer wielding Martian named Myra****with the help of Devion the Devatron and had found out that Myra was not like other Martians. She actually resented the Martian way of life and wished to oppose it and Shadow presented her quite an opportunity to do that. Shadow was taking her back to the Martian ship but Shadow was going to do more than that, he was going to dish out some Martian punishment at the same time. Myra would pretend she was still on the Martian's side to keep up appearances but she had Shadow's comlink on her as they had planned so they'd be able to listen in on the Martians whenever they had a conversation with each other and see what they're up to next. Shadow and Rouge arrived at the Martian ship and Shadow screeched to a halt. He put Myra down and he stared at the Martian ship. He hated the look of it and was looking forward to causing some damage to it.

"So that's where you retreated to." murmured Shadow "Not a bad hiding place, I never would have guessed that you Martians had run away to this place. I'm surprised we coincidentally ended up fighting you in the same place the Martians decided to hide in."

"I bet it is surprising." said Myra "So, what are you gonna do now you've taken me back here? You just gonna leave me to it and go home?"

"No, I'm gonna do some sabotage while I'm here." said Shadow,

cracking his knuckles "I'll slow those Martians down so they'll take forever to make their next move and stop them from repairing their ship from the damage done to it earlier. After all, the slower they are, the quicker we kick them out of Mobius."

"Ah, I see." said Myra "Please for the love of Mercury, don't destroy the damn thing though! The Martians can't leave if you destroy the ship you know!"

"I shall keep myself under control and make sure I do not destroy the ship." said Shadow "I'll just do some damage and maybe see what I can find in there. I'm sure they've got something useful I could destroy and stop them from using it."

"And I'm gonna help you." said Rouge "I owe those Martians a good kick in the head for daring to disturb our peace and attempt to destroy our world."

"Say, why don't we have a pretend fight?" asked Myra "We could stage a fight between us and "accidentally" damage the ship while we're fighting. That way I can keep up appearances and you still get to do your stuff."

"I like the sound of that Myra honey." said Rouge "What do you think Shadow boy?"

"I think that's a great idea." said Shadow "Let's get to it Myra."

"Very well." said Myra "You know, this is gonna feel weird compared to our earlier battle won't it? We're pretending to fight each other this time around and I'm not gonna be trying to kill you both."

"The irony behind all that is delicious." said Shadow, a dry smirk on his face "Now let's go!"

With that said, Shadow, Rouge and Myra lunged at each other and began their pretend battle. But Shadow was going to end up doing more here than he realized once he entered the ship and found out that not only Martians were in there…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 126 for the very beginning of this saga.**

**** We all know "how well" that plan worked don't we? It's all happened in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 127-133**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 120-125**

Well, Shadow and Rouge are here! Will they save Charmy, Kiara and Scott while they're here? And what's gonna happen when the Royal Fighters and Eggman arrive on the scene? Get ready for an explosive chapter for the finale to this saga beings next time...

So Sally haters, do you dare call Sally a Mary-Sue now? :p

Divide and Conquer: The Home Front 4

Arc 17: Divide and Conquer: The Home Front

The Martian Invasion Midquel

Takes place during Stories 127-133 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 4: The Battle of Megapolis

"Hello, who is it?" asked Dr. Eggman, his face as smug as the most conceited of people.

"It's Queen Sally Acorn and I've got something to say…" said Queen Sally Acorn, her face as cold as ice as she glowered at the fact doctor that was displayed on the computer screen right now.

Today had not been going well for the Royal Fighters at all. First the team had to split up and fend off attacking Martians all over the world*, then Count Nyder arrived and destroyed the city's shield generator to prevent them from protecting themselves from harm, then he kidnaps Charmy Bee, Kiara the Cheetah and Scott the Lynx and takes them back to his ship, then Eggman comes asking for an alliance only for Sally's hubris to cloud her judgement and send him away and now Eggman was preventing them from using their own satellites, which Eggman's assistant bot Katherine had hacked into, to find the Martian ship by planting a virus in the satellites that locks them out and doesn't let anyone but Eggman use it and all just to make them accept his alliance. Sally was not content to be siding with Eggman, especially as he's hacked into Mobius' satellites and radios but denying his request had just wasted a lot of valuable time so Sally was going to accept his offer this time and get it over with. That way, they can FINALLY get to the Martian ship and save their comrades. It was quite incredulous that Sally would end up making an alliance she rather hotly turned down. All the others in the room with her: Nicole the Lynx, Espio the Chameleon, Vector the Crocodile, Miranda Mongoose, Kari the Rat, Thunder & Bolt the Chipmunks, Jessica the Cougar, Taran the Lynx, Felix the Peacock

and Thomas Tiger watched on as Sally prepared to speak to Dr. Eggman.

"Since you've hacked into our satellites and are now preventing us from using them to find what we're looking for, I've decided to change my mind and **accept** your stupid alliance this time around." muttered Sally "You and your goons can join us in stopping the Martians just like you've sent some robots to help our friends abroad, happy now?"

Dr. Eggman grinned widely as he heard Sally say all that. The squirrel queen could hardly believe she even said those words to Dr. Eggman right now. Unbeknownst to Eggman though, Nicole had pressed something on the control pad as Sally was talking to Eggman. It was flashing a faint yellow and making some weird squiggle noises. It appeared to be tracking something down. Eggman didn't notice this of course for the button was flashing out of his view-point and the noises weren't loud enough to be clearly audible. Sally could see Nicole was up to something but she kept her face fixed directly on Eggman to avoid suspicion from him and continued talking to him.

"I'm so glad you've decided to stop being so stubborn and accept my offer!" crowed Dr. Eggman "I bet your hubris has been very costly to your captured comrades though I mean, who knows what's been happening to them while you've been delaying their rescue?"

"How do you know about that?" asked Sally.

"I spied on you lot talking to each other before I arrived you silly little squirrel." snapped Eggman "How do you think I know? So anyways, you've wasted enough valuable time so now you've made the alliance, here's my end of the bargain as promised: the Martian ship is located in Megapolis. You must visualize Megapolis as you warp yourself over to the Martian ship. To give you some more clarification on where to go, here are the coordinates as to where EXACTLY in Megapolis it is..."

The image of his face disappeared and was replaced by a satellite image of Megapolis and most importantly, where the Martian ship was located. The coordinates were displayed along with the image

and Sally's marvellous brain soaked them up almost immediately for she was very good at taking in technical facts like that. The image disappeared after two minutes (Eggman left it up that long to give them time to memorize or write down the coordinates) and Eggman returned on the screen.

"So did you get all that?" asked Eggman.

"I did thank you very much." said Sally "I don't see why you couldn't have just told us that already instead of making it needlessly complicated for all of us."

"I don't give away information for free you little brat!" snapped Eggman "Your alliance with me was all the pay I needed to relinquish such information! I don't see why YOU had to make it so hard for all of us when all you had to do was say "yes" and then we'd be over stopping those Martians already!"

"We get it Eggman, stop making a big scene about it all!" shouted Sally "I'm sorry I declined you earlier, I should have accepted you when you made the offer earlier, **OK?!** "

Eggman recoiled a little. He had NEVER seen Sally get so furious before. The girl was clearly becoming more strong-willed all of the sudden and that might be in part of her turn to Royal Fighter (not that Eggman knows of course). Eggman shook it off though and he regained himself.

"OK…I'm sorry Sally." said Eggman "I'll drop it now. So then, now the alliance is made and the location's been provided for you, we can all go over to the ship and destroy those Martians! I will meet you there Mobians! Ta, ta for now…"

With that said Dr. Eggman switched off and the screen went back to normal. The moment Dr. Eggman's message ended, Sally looked at Nicole and smiled at her.

"I see you've activated the automated message-tracker system." she said, taking note of the flashing button Nicole had pressed.

"I did indeed Sally." said Nicole brightly "You see, I came up with

this great idea. We have USB-drives that contain termination viruses on them right? And we use those to delete corrupted programmes in our computer systems and any unwanted software right? Well what if we could use one of those to terminate Dr. Eggman's virus? I came up with that thought but then I needed to find out where Dr. Eggman is for we can't access the satellites and upload a termination virus into them and kill Eggman's virus thanks to him so I activated the message-tracker to trace Eggman's message back to its source and pinpoint his location. He's still in the Northern Border of Megapolis like he always has been according to these coordinates and he's hiding underground." she added, showing what the message-tracker had come up with on a small computer screen next to the main, large computer screen "Now I've found Eggman's location, all I have to do is sneak into his base and access the satellites through his computer network and then upload a termination virus to kill his virus."

"That's very clever of you Nicole." complimented Sally "And since Eggman will be fighting the Martians with us, he won't know a thing that's going on back in his base. But terminating his virus won't change the fact Katherine's hacked into them though."

"Once the virus is terminated, I'll counter-hack her and lock her and Eggman out of the system permanently." said Nicole "I'm really good at counter-hacking others after all."

"Nicole, you are brilliant." said Sally, smiling brightly and hugging her lady-in-waiting graciously "You have single-handedly just come up with a plan to kick Eggman out of our satellites."

"But what about the radios?" asked Vector "Katherine hacked into those too remember."

"I think once I counter-hack her, she'll be blocked out of the radios as well as the satellites." suggested Nicole "She hacked into both at once so her hacking programme will contain both satellites and radios and not just one or the other when I counter-hack her."

"O…K…makes sense I suppose…" said a very confused Vector, scratching his head. He wasn't that good with techno mumbo-jumbo so he didn't understand much of what Nicole had just said.

"OK, now we have a plan, let's join Eggman in stopping those Martians and saving our comrades!" announced Sally in true leadership fashion "We will warp over to the ship and join him immediately while Nicole will use the warp ring to warp over to Eggman's base. I recommend waiting for a few minutes before you go over though Nicole, make double certain that the base might be clear when you enter it."

"Yes Sally." said Nicole "I promise you that I won't get into trouble or anything while I'm there."

"I know you'll be safe Nicole." said Sally, hugging Nicole for good luck "And I know you'll be careful so I'm not too worried. You will do great when you get in Eggman's base, I know you will."

"Thanks Sally." said Nicole graciously.

Sally smiled at her best friend and she turned to the others. She took Silver's Super Warp Ring out of her vest pocket and she flicked it up into the air. The warp ring extended up to twice its size and opened up a portal from Royal HQ over to Megapolis, where the Martian ship was stationed. Once the portal was opened up, the Mobians all ran through it, except for Thomas Tiger of course for he had been crippled by Devion** during the Devatron invasion and was going to be like that forever. He was in charge of Royal HQ while the others were away. The moment everybody ran through the warp ring, the portal closed behind them and the warp ring shrunk down to normal size. Nicole seized it and she twirled it around her finger. She was pretty nervous about her idea. All sorts of things could happen over in Eggman's base. She could get captured and become a prisoner of Eggman, she could get roboticized or even get killed. So as much as Nicole was willing to get Eggman out of the satellites, she was reasonably nervous about the whole thing. Thomas could see that Nicole looked uneasy and he decided to comfort her.

"Nervous child?" he asked "I can understand what you're feeling right now, I really can. Well child, don't worry on what could possibly happen while you're in Eggman's base, just remember that they may not happen."

"I know Thomas but I AM going directly into Eggman's territory aren't I?" noted Nicole "I have every right to be nervous about the whole thing. But I'm willing to take all these risks if it means getting Eggman out of our satellites and render him unable to spy on us."

"I admire your courage Nicole." said Thomas kindly "If my back wasn't broken, I'd willingly come over to Eggman's base with you and help you in anyway I can."

"Thanks Thomas." said Nicole "But as you so rightfully note, it's not safe for you to be going into situations like this given your crippled state. You're best suited to stay here and make sure Royal HQ stays running."

"I know dear child." said Thomas grimly "I wish you the best of luck over there by the way. And I sincerely hope the others come back with Scott, Charmy and most of all, my little rookie Kiara. I don't know what I'd do if she were to perish while in the Martian's captivity."

"I'm sure the others will come back with the three safe and sound Thomas, don't you worry about it." said Nicole kindly "Well, goodbye Thomas. I'm off now and I assure you I will come back alive and successful."

"I'm sure you will Nicole." said Thomas "Good luck."

Nicole smiled graciously at the old tiger. She clasped her hand tightly around the Super Warp Ring and she ran out of the room to fetch something. She was getting a termination virus USB drive from the inventory so she could terminate Eggman's virus. Nicole ran into the inventory and she found a black USB drive that contained the virus. How fortunate that they had these kind of things on them for one was ending up being used in a scenario nobody could have anticipated at all in their lives. Nicole held onto the link tightly and she activated the Super Warp Ring and opened up a portal from Royal HQ to Eggman's base. She peeked inside the warp ring to see if the coast was clear. Everything seemed clear and Eggman was nowhere in sight so she could safely assume he'd left already. With that said, Nicole stepped through the warp ring and over into Eggman's base, leaving Thomas alone in Royal HQ to look after

himself. All the crippled old Field Marshal could do now was sit back, relax and wait. As the minutes ticked slowly by, Thomas had a feeling he'd be sitting around for a while and that the next few minutes were going to be tense indeed…

Meanwhile back on the Martian ship, Count Nyder had plugged Charmy into the Visual Mind-Reader Link and was watching the screen very closely as Charmy's memories played for him on the machine. Scott and Kiara had had their turns already and they had yielded no information of any value to the Martian whatsoever. Nyder was hoping dearly that Charmy would give him what he was looking for. As he watched closely, Scott and Kiara looked at each other and prayed as hard as they could that Charmy wouldn't yield the information Nyder is looking for. But unfortunately for them, Charmy DID have the information Nyder wanted and that was the location of the Chaos Emeralds. While Charmy had never seen WHERE precisely the Chaos Emeralds were kept, he had been on Angel Island during the time of the Black Arms invasion*** and he had seen where the Master Emerald was kept and had also seen Sonic get the Chaos Emeralds before he warped away to help his friends in Rail Canyon at the time so he would be giving Nyder the information he desired. And right now, Nyder was on the scene where Team Chaotix were following Sonic after he snuck off to heal himself with a Chaos Regeneration. Nyder watched the scene very closely.

"This looks like it's going to lead somewhere, I hope it does." said Nyder "I will say, I'm surprise you Mobians ended up against the Black Arms of all creatures, you rally do not want to mess with those guys. Believe me, we Martians have met them before and they're almost as dangerous and ruthless as we are, maybe more so."

"Big…deal…" huffed Scott "Sonic…told us…they've…been beaten…anyway…he said they…got…beaten just…yesterday…"

"If…the Devatrons…failed to conquer…our world…than what hope…does any…crazy alien…race have…in taking over…our world?" sniffed Kiara.

Nyder ignored her and he watched on as on the screen, Team Chaotix arrived at AngelIsland and watched as Sonic hovered up onto it. Nyder's eyes widened in an incredulous stare. He couldn't believe what he was looking at.

"Well blow me to the moon!" he gasped "A FLOATING island?! This planet harbours many amazing sights doesn't it?! Guess destroying Mobius will be more fun then I imagined with wonders like that."

Scott and Kiara looked at each other in wonder. They had never seen AngelIsland but they had heard of it and they had heard that it was a floating island so they began to wonder was Nyder talking about AngelIsland. If so then would it be anything of note to Nyder? They watched Nyder as he continued to watch the footage. He watched as Team Chaotix's hover saucer ascended up and up towards AngelIsland until they reached the surface and stepped onto it. Sonic's Chaos Regeneration had just ended and Nyder could see, from the view point of Charmy Bee, the Master Emerald standing proudly atop the shrine and sparkling brightly. Nyder was surprised at the sight of it for Marik hadn't described something like this to him. It matched the Chaos Emerald's descriptions though only it was much larger than what Marik said they were. Was this something Marik didn't know about? If so then Nyder had likely made a great discovery and found out about something maybe more powerful than the Chaos Emeralds themselves. Nyder continued watching more of the footage until he saw Sonic arriving back at the Master Emerald with the Chaos Emeralds in his hands, all seven of them (they have eight now but that was before they required the Black Arms' Black Emerald and cleansed it off its dark power). Nyder paused the footage and he looked at the Chaos Emeralds in Sonic's hands. Marik had described there being seven of them and they're all differently coloured emeralds. And those emeralds matched his descriptions perfectly. Nyder grinned evilly to himself.

"Bingo…" he crooned, his voice as dark as a demon's "Found them….they reside on that floating island in the middle of some sandy plains. Not only are there seven emeralds but they seem to have a really big emerald too. I bet all of them together will give us powers on an apocalyptic scale if we got them all!"

Scott and Kiara thought their hearts were going to stop. Charmy DID

have the information he required and now Nyder knows where the Chaos Emeralds are hiding! Oh no, Nyder was going to look for the Chaos Emeralds now and steal them all! Scott and Kiara had seen what kind of power the emeralds have for they were all there when Sonic and Shadow turned super to defeat Devion's Deva-Dragon**** so goodness knows what would happen if the Martians got them all! They had to be stopped and fast before they could go looking for them! Nyder cackled maniacally with glee at his discovery and he took the helmet off of Charmy's head. Charmy woke up with a start and looked around frantically.

"Oh boy…that was…hic-cup…surreal and weird…not to mention painful…" he slurred groggily "My head…hurts!"

Nyder just put Charmy's own helmet back onto the bee's head and he smiled like a bogeyman at Charmy. Charmy just gulped nervously, shaking like a leaf.

"Thank you so much little bug." crowed Nyder "You have just given me the location of the Chaos Emeralds. Thank you so, so much. Now I will steal them all for the Martians and we will use them to end your world!"

Charmy was so shocked that he couldn't speak. He thought he was going to drop dead with horror all of the sudden. Nyder knows where the emeralds are now?! This day had just gotten worse! Nyder then bared his metal claws at Charmy and he lightly stroked his neck with them. He then used his other hand to pin him to the restraint bed for Charmy wasn't restrained to it.

"Now you've given me the information I require, all three of you are no longer required to be kept alive." he said menacingly as he prepared to plunge his claws into Charmy's neck and finish him off.

Charmy covered his eyes in horror, unable to beat witness to his inevitable demise. Scott and Kiara didn't want to watch either so they turned their heads away and closed their eyes. Nyder rose his hand up high but before he could deliver the killing blow, a loud clang noise rung through the ship and stopped him dead in his tracks. Nyder ceased his actions and he looked around, wondering what that noise was. Then another clang noise was heard, this one

heavy and loud as if something had hit the ship very hard. Nyder began to wonder what all the noise was about. Then a third, even louder clang was heard and it sounded like something hitting the outside of the ship's bodywork.

"What is going on out there?!" demanded Nyder furiously.

He then grabbed Charmy and hauled him back to Scott and Kiara. He quickly chained him back up and rose him back up off the floor by the chains around his wrists so now Charmy was back to hanging around with Scott and Kiara and he glowered at his prisoners.

"I'll deal with you three later." he snarled "It appears I have outside matters to deal with."

With that said, Nyder left his prisoners to dangle around in the dungeon and he strode off out the dungeon and down the corridors to the docking ramp. He thumped a button on the wall on his way and the docking ramp lowered down to the ground to let him out of the ship and into the wide open space outside. The wind that blustered outside blew up the ramp as it lowered down and fresh air began to seep inside the ship. Nyder could feel the wind in his face as he strode down the ramp and into the open to see what was going on outside. The ramp closed up behind him the moment he stepped down it and he looked around.

"Whoever it is bashing the ship, can you…?"

He was rudely cut off by the sudden appearance of Myra. She had been sent flying towards Count Nyder by something and she almost crashed into him. Nyder jumped out of the way and Myra landed on the ground back first. She and her opponents from earlier, Shadow the Hedgehog & Rouge the Bat, were having a pretend fight to keep up appearances for they were near the Martian ship and would need to keep up the subtlety with Myra since she was plotting to betray the Martians and would need to keep fooling the Martians into thinking she was still on their side. The fight was pretty convincing, it really looked like a real fight and not a fake one. Also, the pretend fight was an excuse for Shadow to do some damage to the ship and slow the Martians down so they could remain a step ahead of them. Myra picked herself up and she ran back towards Shadow with her

magnetism hammer raised high above her head, roaring loudly. Nyder picked himself up and gaped at what he saw. Myra was back and she was fighting Shadow and Rouge as hard as she could. She swung her hammer at Shadow but missed him by centimetres as Shadow leaped backwards out of the way. Rouge screw-kicked Myra in the back and knocked her down onto the ground as Nyder watched them fight.

"Myra?!" he blurted "What the heck are YOU doing back here so soon?!"

"What does it look like I'm doing jackass?!" snapped Myra, hammering Rouge in the face as hard as she could (she has to make this look convincing you know) "I'm trying to kill these blasted Mobians! I attacked around the very area we're in and the Royal Fighters sent these two twerps to stop me! They're very powerful and tough to beat too, can you give me a hand out here?!" she cried out as Shadow threw a Chaos Spear at her and she held up her hammer to block the blow.

Nyder was not the man to ignore a call for help after all. He drew out his extendable sword and he extended its blade. He charged towards Shadow and Rouge with his sword held up high and roaring like an ogre. Shadow saw him coming and he jumped directly over him and out of his way as Nyder lunged at him. Shadow landed behind Nyder and he socked him in the back, causing him to yelp in surprise and hurl forward. Rouge saw the opportunity to kick him in the side as he hurled forward onto the ground.

"And who might this ugly mug be?" she sneered.

"That is Count Nyder." said Myra "He replaced Count Dragon after two Mobians apparently named Silver and Blaze killed him. He's a weapons nutter and I'm sure he has a weapon that will put you two down for good!"

Nyder was pretty surprised to hear Myra compliment him like that. She rarely ever said a word to him and even then, she never said much nice about him. He was quite flattered to hear her say that. But of course, Myra was just keeping up appearances to mask her intended treachery so complimenting Nyder was just part of the act

(seriously, this girl should become an actress when she leaves the Martian fleet! She's THAT good at it!). Shadow, playing along with the act, sneered at Nyder.

"Oh is that so? Well let's see how good he REALLY is!" he crooned at Nyder.

Nyder jumped up onto his feet and he slashed at Shadow with his sword. Shadow dodged the attack and he spin-dashed Nyder in the gut. Myra "tried" to help him but Shadow spin-dashed at her to make her stand back. Shadow ended up crashing into the Martian ship and leaving a dent in the bodywork. The ship had a good few dents in it already from Shadow, Rouge and Myra's pretend fight and now Shadow just added another one to it. Nyder growled furiously at Shadow and he barked at Myra.

"Clamp them with magnetic collars!" he ordered.

Myra obeyed and she aimed her hammer at Shadow and Rouge. She fired magnetic collars at them but she purposefully made her aim really bad so she ended up missing them. Rouge screw-kicked Myra and sent her flying backwards. Nyder fumed at her and he ran towards Shadow with his sword poised and ready. He slashed at Shadow again but he missed and Shadow tripped him up with a swift kick to the legs. Nyder picked himself up only to get screw-kicked in the back by Rouge. After knocking Nyder down, Rouge screw-kicked the ship and ended up busting a hole in it. Shadow spin-dashed at the ship and he ended up hitting the boarding ramp so hard that it ended up coming down, allowing anybody to get inside. Shadow prepared to run up into the ship but Myra jumped in and hammered him away. Shadow hurled backwards across the battlefield and he skidded to a halt. Shadow zoomed back towards Myra and he homing-attacked her as hard as he could, sending her flying backwards across the battlefield. This may just be a pretend fight between them but that wasn't going to hold him back. He was going to go as hard as he wanted on Myra. After all, the more convincing the fight is, the better. Myra picked herself up and smirked at Shadow. She was pretty impressed with how well he was doing at making this fake battle look convincing. True Shadow's attacks may hurt her a little but she was willing to put up with the pain for the sake of subtlety. Myra picked herself up and charged

back towards Shadow, ready to hammer him into the ground like a nail with her hammer. Shadow saw Myra coming and he decided to let Myra have the pleasure of walloping her own comrades. Shadow ran over to Count Nyder, who was trying to slice Rouge to ribbons with his sword and he dared Myra to come over to him. Myra swung her hammer at Shadow only for Shadow to jump out of the way, causing Myra to hit Nyder. Myra didn't mind this at all for she was quite happy to hit one of her own. She did hit the Martians in the fleet after all considering their way of life didn't appeal to her. Nyder was thrown across the battlefield by the hammer and he crashed head-first into one of the ship's landing legs. Shadow and Rouge just laughed at Nyder, they thought that was very funny. Even Myra laughed at him. It felt good to hit one of her comrades at last. Given how Shadow jumped in front of Nyder and then away as she swung at him, Nyder will hopefully assume it was an accident and continue as normal. Nyder picked himself up, rubbing his sore back better and he glowered at Myra, wondering what was up with her all of the sudden.

"You clumsy little moon rock! Why did you hit me?!" snarled Nyder.

"I'm sorry Nyder! It was an accident! I was aiming for Shadow!" shrieked Myra.

"Well work on your aim and make sure you hit who you're meant to next time!" snapped Nyder "Now get back to the fight you stupid woman!"

Myra obeyed and she ran towards Shadow and Rouge with her hammer at the ready and Nyder joined her with his sword ready to slice them in two. Shadow and Rouge smirked at the two Martians and they charged towards the two as fast as they could.

Myra obeyed and she ran towards Shadow and Rouge with her hammer at the ready and Nyder joined her with his sword ready to slice them in two. Shadow and Rouge smirked at the two Martians and they charged towards the two as fast as they could. As they fought, the Royal Fighters suddenly arrived on the scene through the warp ring. Sally had memorized the coordinates given to her by Dr. Eggman earlier and thus, her opening of the warp ring had been pretty accurate. They all piled out of the warp ring and ran around

the Martian ship. They came behind a landing leg and looked to see what was happening. To their surprise, they could see Shadow and Rouge fighting Count Nyder and Myra. They weren't expecting to suddenly run into a battle after all. Sally's eyes widened at the sight of Shadow and Rouge fighting off Myra and Nyder.

"Goodness gracious me!" gasped Sally "It's Shadow and Rouge! It seems they've managed to find the Martian ship already and are against Count Nyder and…whoever the heck that girl with the hammer is."

"She could give Amy a run for her money with that big mallet." chuckled Vector.

"Well, now we're here, we can give the two a helping hand." said Miranda, whipping out her electro-prod and priming it "So who's going to save Scott, Kiara and Charmy then?"

"Thunder and Bolt can do the job." said Sally "We'll stay out here and…"

Before she could finish her sentence, Nyder was sent flying towards them by Shadow and he crashed into the ship's landing leg, the very one the Royal Fighters were standing by, startling them all and making them all leap backwards. Nyder groaned in pain and he picked himself up. To the Royal Fighter's misfortune, as he picked himself up, he spotted them and gasped in surprise at them.

"The Queen?! The Royal Fighters?!" he blurted "Lord in hell, can this day get anymore unfortunate for me!"

He then rolled up his sleeve and barked into a communicator he had on his wrist.

"Martian soldiers, we have intruders! Get out here NOW!" he bellowed at the top of his voice.

That did it, Sally's legs seemed to spring randomly into action for she jumped at Nyder very suddenly and knocked him down onto the ground with her hands on his shoulders. Nyder was pinned down by Sally and the squirrel queen raised her arm up high, ready to punch

his daylights out for that. Myra however ran in and hammered Sally away from Nyder and sent her skidding sharply across her side on the ground, leaving her with a lot of cuts and grazes. Sally picked herself up only to see that Martian soldiers were beginning to pile out of the ship. Since the ramp had been busted open by the earlier onslaught, they just ran outside without having to wait for it to lower. The Martian soldiers all ran out of the ship and they started pointing their rifles at the Royal Fighters, ready to blast them to smithereens. Sally gasped in surprise but she quickly regained herself and yelled aloud.

"Royal Fighters, attack and don't hold back! We've got our friends to save!"

With that said, the Royal Fighters and the Martians all ran into battle and a huge fight ensued outside of the Martian ship. Laser blasts shot out everywhere, fists flew, blows were landed and attacks were launched. And it was just about to get even bigger now for Dr. Eggman had arrived on the scene with an army of Egg-Pawns, his servant-bot Katherine and the newly-programmed Devion with him. After Shadow, Rouge and Myra had made peace with each other, Devion had come back to Eggman and was now joining up with the Mobians in fighting the Martians. The Martians were taken aback at the sudden arrival of robots but they didn't let that bring them down. There was enough Martians to match the Mobians and Egg-Pawns still so they weren't outnumbered or anything. The Egg-Pawns started shooting at the Martians and the Martians began shooting back at them. The shooting match was instantly beginning to get frantic and intense as shots flew everywhere, hitting Martians and Egg-Pawns alike in several different places but none of the shots taking any lives yet. Eggman was watching from his Egg-Pod and he was laughing and cackling like a demented gremlin as he watched his Egg-Pawns fight back the Martians. Even Katherine was getting involved in the action with her force-field deployed as always. Sally and the others were pleased to see that Eggman was here as promised and they fought back even harder. Nyder couldn't believe what was going on right now as he swung at Sally with his sword only to miss and get a sharp kick to the face from the squirrel queen. Luck was finally on his side and then all of this begins happening?! Why did it all have to happen while the best Martians were away?!

He was especially horrified to see Devion himself among the Eggman robots. How did they get HIM on their side?! That's all he could wonder to himself as he fought off his opponents. The Martians fought as hard as they could but the Mobians and Egg-Pawns were putting up the better fight and the Martians were beginning to lose already. Devion began ploughing through the Martians with ease. He blasted them all away with his gauntlet blasters and he sliced a few to pieces with his gauntlet blades as well. He fought on through the Martians until he reached Sally and Sally saw that Devion was coming to her.

"Devion! Three of our comrades are in the Martian ship! Can you save them while we keep the Martians busy please?" asked Sally.

"I shall get to the given task immediately." purred Devion "Since we are on the same side for this encounter, I will oblige to the wishes of the Mobians as well."

"Thank you." said Sally "But this won't change anything about us."

Devion didn't take much notice of that and he turned away from Sally, leaving her to fight off Count Nyder. Devion ran off towards the Martian ship and he ran up the ramp and into the ship before any Martians could stop him (not that any are willing to do so anyway). Now Devion was on the Martian ship, he belted down the corridors in search of Scott, Charmy and Kiara. He knew where to look since on a ship, dungeons and prisons are always located at the bottom of the ship so he just had to get down to the bottom floor and he was there. And since all the Martians were outside fighting Eggman and the Mobians, he was going to have no problems whatsoever…

Meanwhile, Nicole had opened up a portal to Eggman's base with Silver's Super Warp Ring and she stepped through the portal and into the base to get started. It really was a good idea of her to trace Eggman's signal back to its source and find Eggman's headquarters so she could do this mission of sabotage. She had looked around before stepping through the portal and to her good fortune, the coast was clear. Eggman must have left the base already. That meant she

had the whole underground base to herself. It amazed Nicole to no end that this is what Eggman had been reduced to. He once had a grand robotic metropolis of his own to call home and after the world got de-roboticized by Tails & Ruben and Shadow tore the city down looking for Eggman*****, this is what he had to call home now, a simple underground bunker with the facilities of a base. How the mighty truly have fallen. A scientist that lived in a big robotic city now lives in a lonely underground base. Nicole couldn't help but wonder why Eggman hadn't bothered rebuilding Robotropolis yet. Did he just get fed up of it getting destroyed and decided to just not bother with it until he conquers Mobius? That would make sense given when he finally conquers the planet nobody will be ABLE to destroy Robotropolis…or maybe not. Now Nicole was in the base, she held the warp ring tightly with her hand while also holding the USB-drive in the other. She crept over to Eggman's computer monitor and sat down at it. Her heart was thumping madly against her chest. This was bound to be one of the most intense moments of her life, infiltrating enemy headquarters and terminating viruses, all on her own no less.

"OK Nicole, just relax." she told herself "Eggman's gone fighting the Martians, there's nobody here so there's nothing to worry about. Just focus on your objective."

She swallowed a lump in her throat nervously as she sat down at the computer monitor and looked at it. The monitor had been left on and the satellites were still accessed by it. Eggman had been in such a hurry to get to fighting the Martians that he had simply forgotten to turn the monitor off. Lucky for Nicole otherwise she'd have to turn it back on and get through a password (did you really think Eggman's computer monitors wouldn't have a password?) and she would have no idea what Eggman's password could possibly be. Nicole studied the screen for a minute and realized that the monitors were displaying the satellite's internal networking systems. Just the thing she needed.

"OK…now let's get rid of that virus." said Nicole, taking the cap off the USB-drive and slotting it into a drive slot on the control pad.

The moment the drive was plugged in, a blue light on top of it started flashing and a little box came up saying "Drive plugged in.

Searching for virus". Nicole beamed, that meant it was working. The drive started searching for a minute before it found the virus uploaded into the satellites by Katherine and a box came up saying "Virus detected! Commence termination?" and had the options of "Yes" or "No" under the writing. Nicole instantly clicked the "Yes" option. With that done, the drive's light began to flash even brighter as it began to upload its virus termination programme. These drives had mainly been used at Royal HQ whenever their computer monitors got a virus or their programmes got interrupted or any unwanted software needed deleting and now Nicole was using one to give them back control of the satellites. A loading bar came up on the screen as the programme began to load. Nicole twiddled her fingers nervously as she waited for the programme to be uploaded into the network.

"Come on…come on…please…hurry up…" she said anxiously.

The termination programme takes a while to upload, that was the only downside to the whole thing. But Nicole could wait. After all, nobody was around to get her after all so it wasn't like she was going to get caught or anything. Five minutes passed by and the programme finally uploaded. Nicole sighed with relief as the termination programme began its work. A few minutes later, a screen came up saying "Virus Terminated!", meaning that Katherine's virus was gone and the satellites were the Mobian's once again.

"Yes!" cheered Nicole "It worked, it worked, it worked! Ha, ha, ha! Now for the next part…counter-hacking Katherine."

Her excitement died down as she thought on that. She had a nasty feeling Katherine wasn't going to be that easy to hack or anything and that it was going to take a while for her to get through. But Nicole was determined to try. Nicole tapped some keys on the keyboard and began her work. She managed to find Katherine's entry points and she accessed it. There were a lot of codes, particularly binary codes and algorithms that Nicole had to get through in order to counter-hack Katherine. But Nicole's brilliant brain wasn't going to fail her now. Nicole began cracking the codes with relative ease and she managed to get into Katherine's programme. There were a lot of codes and they started getting

harder and harder as they went along but Nicole was determined to beat Katherine at her own game. It's a good thing Katherine herself wasn't here otherwise this would be a lot harder since Katherine would likely fight with her. A few tense minutes passed and Nicole finally managed to break into Katherine's programme. She wiped some sweat off her forehead and started tapping some more keys. In a matter of minutes, Nicole managed to counter-hack Katherine and lock her out of the satellites. Katherine could now no longer access them and the Mobians had them back for good. Katherine wouldn't be able to hack them again for Nicole's counter-hacking was too thorough and precise for anything to get past. Nicole had completed her mission. Nicole sighed with relief and put her hand over her heart.

"Phew…I've done it." she whispered to herself "The satellites are ours again and Katherine can't access them anymore. Eggman's lost what advantage he had over us once again and he'll never get it back."

Pleased with her handiwork, Nicole decided to leave Eggman's base since she had no reason to hang around any longer. Nicole took the drive out of the slot and she flicked the warp ring up into the air. It opened up a portal back to Royal HQ and Thomas Tiger was waiting for her on the other side. Nicole handed him the drive.

"I've done my task, can you put this back for me while I go join the others?" asked Nicole.

"Certainly Nicole." said Thomas, taking the drive and wheeling off in his wheelchair.

Now Nicole had gotten rid of the drive, she closed the warp ring and visualized Megapolis. She flicked it up again and it opened up a portal to Megapolis, the very place the Martian ship was located in. She'd now be able to join her friends in fighting the Martians. As Nicole stepped through the warp ring, she began to wonder how the fight was going and who was winning so far…

Nicole would be happy to be warping over to Megapolis at this very

moment for the Martians were getting their backsides handed to them on a silver platter right now. The Martians were fighting as hard as they possibly could but despite their best efforts, the Mobians and Eggman robots were beginning to overpower them minute by minute. The Mobians already put up a tough battle earlier back at New Mobotropolis and now they were joined up with Dr. Eggman and his robots, the Martians were having an even harder time. As Count Nyder fought against Sally Acorn (seriously, why does he keep picking on Sally? Does he just vehemently loathe her or something?!) he began to think that maybe the whole "Divide and Conquer" idea wasn't such a good idea after all. If Diablo and the others were still here then chances are, the Martians would be putting up a better fight. Count Nyder and Myra weren't really the best Martians to be fending off large forces like this on their own. Speaking of Myra, she had decided to leg it and run back into the ship to avoid getting killed out there. She wasn't going to let herself get finished off before she could betray her kind and leave them in the dust after all. Before running away though, Myra had used her magnetism hammer to push back the Eggman robots, Katherine included, giving the Martians the opportunity to start shooting at them and destroying them while they were distracted. Once Myra had done that, she had run for it into the ship while everybody was distracted. As she ran into the ship, Myra noticed that Devion was also on the ship and he had two bodies under one arm and another body under the other. They were the bodies of Scott, Charmy and Kiara. Devion had found their cell after a while of searching and he cut them down by slashing their chains to pieces with his arm blades. The three were surprised to be rescued by Devion but they didn't mind for Devion had told them why he was here and that Eggman was helping them fight off the Martians right now. Devion had Scott and Charmy on his right arm and Kiara under his left arm and he was running down the corridor and to the boarding ramp of the ship as fast as he could. Myra respectfully stood to the side as Devion ran past her, taking no notice of the treacherous Martian. Myra began to wonder why Devion was rescuing what appeared to be Mobian captives but she shrugged it off, it didn't matter to her for it wasn't important. Devion ran on until he reached the boarding ramp and he ran down it and out of the Martian ship. Scott, Charmy and Kiara beamed happily as the fresh air outside began to drift into their faces. How much better they felt now they were getting some

fresh air at last. Devion looked around the carnage going on around him and tried to see if he could spot Sally amongst the battling Mobians, Martians and Eggman robots. He spotted her fighting off Count Nyder and he ran towards her. Nyder swung his sword at Sally but Sally ducked and she slugged Nyder in the stomach as hard as she could. Nyder doubled over but he wasn't down for long. He punched Sally in the face but Sally retaliated by upper-cutting Nyder in the face. She then reached into his cloak pocket and found the Chaos Cluster fragments he had with him. She yanked them out of his pocket, threw them on the ground and stomped on them, crushing them and rendering them useless to anybody now. Nyder was livid with Sally for doing that and he growled like a lion at her. He uppercut Sally in the face and knocked her down onto her back. Nyder then aimed the sword at Sally's heart and prepared to plunge his sword into the squirrel's chest while she was down. But Devion jumped in and rammed Nyder away like a charging rhinoceros and Nyder was sent hurling away from Sally. The squirrel queen picked herself up and she looked at the three bodies under Devion's arms. Her face brightened at the sight of them.

"Devion, you've rescued our captured friends!" she cried "Thank you."

"Do not mention it Mobian." said Devion coldly "The three look like they've been tortured severely though, they seem badly hurt and like they can barely keep awake. They are not safe out here with all this fighting going on. They need to be escorted off site immediately."

"I agree Devion but there's nowhere safe we can put them." said Sally "If only I had Silver's Warp Ring on me, I could just warp them back to Royal HQ and drop them off there."

"How humorous that you should mention requiring the aid of such an object, there's one opening up right now." noted Devion, motioning over to behind Sally "And something's coming through it as well.

Sally looked to where Devion was motioning to and to her surprise, she saw the Super Warp Ring opening up and Nicole stepping through it. Sally's face brightened at the sight of Nicole and the two girls hugged each other happily.

"Nicole! How fortuitous of you to show up at just the right time!" cried Sally "So I take it you completed your task?"

"I did indeed Sally." said Nicole "Eggman's not getting into his satellites anymore, I've locked him and Katherine out of them."

Devion's visor widened at that little sentence. He was so surprised to hear that that he dropped Scott, Kiara and Charmy in surprise.

"Task? Eggman and Katherine are locked out of your satellites?" he said, his voice like steel "Are you implying that…?"

Nicole suddenly realized that Devion was standing right behind Sally and thus, had heard everything she had just said. She put her hands to her mouth in horror.

"Oops!" she whimpered.

Devion was so furious to hear what Nicole had just said, he drew out his arm blades and pointed them at the girl's throats.

"You traitors!" he snarled "I thought you were willing to ally yourselves with my master and yet you go and sabotage one of his works behind his back?! Consider this alliance terminated and your heads severed!"

He raised his arm blades up high and prepared to kill Sally and Nicole but before he could do so, a group of Martian soldiers all tackled him like a bunch of rugby players and they brought the reformed Devatron down onto his side. Sally and Nicole decided to take the moment to flee for it since this fight could quickly go against the Mobians if Eggman decided to call off the alliance and terminate them instead. Sally and Nicole grabbed the bodies of Scott and Kiara respectively and they dragged them towards the Super Warp Ring, which was still open.

"Royal Fighters! Fall back!" called Sally "We've rescued our captured friends! Mission's accomplished! Fall back!"

Luckily, all the Royal Fighters heard that and they all abandoned the battle and ran towards the Super Warp Ring. Vector and Espio were quick to scoop up Charmy as they ran through the warp ring. In a

matter of moments the Royal Fighters had all run through the Super Warp Ring and the Super Warp Ring closed up behind them. Count Nyder had seen all this happen and he began to wonder what the big idea was.

"What in the name of Uranus?! The Mobians have retreated!" he blurted "Why would they do that?! They had us on the ropes! Unless…they were only here to rescue their comrades!" he suddenly realized "Yes, that's it! They must have rescued the Mobians I captured while we were fighting! Great, now they can tell that Sally person that I know where the Chaos Emeralds are and build up a defence on the island and prevent me from stealing them! Oooohhhhh how I loathe life sometimes! It can be so unfair to…"

He was rudely cut off by Devion suddenly pushing all the Martians off of himself and then running up to Nyder and upper-cutting him into the air. Nyder hurled through the air like a sheet blowing away in the wind and he landed rather sharply on his back. Nyder picked himself up and shook himself off. He decided that right now, the best thing to do would be retreat right now for the Martians were getting overwhelmed and even though the Mobians had retreated, Eggman did have a Devatron on his side and a robot with a force field to even the odds so he was still going to give them a run for their money. That and Eggman would probably just bring in more robots to fight them even if they managed to fight off the ones he currently had. Nyder called out to all the Martian soldiers.

"Martians! Fall back! This battle is lost! We're retreating!"

With that said, all of the Martians abandoned the battle and they ran back into the ship as quickly as they possibly could. The Martians may hate retreating but they knew that if they had to retreat, they had to retreat whether they liked it or not. Dr. Eggman watched as the Martians fled for their lives and all piled into the ship. The Martian ship then suddenly took off and flew away once all the Martians were onboard. The Martians were keen to get as far away from Dr. Eggman as possible. Once the ship was up in the air, Count Nyder sighed to himself. He was the one piloting the ship right now and he grumbled to himself.

"This day is the worst day of my life!" he moaned "I have a tough

time with the Mobians outside their own city and fail to destroy and then once I capture three of them and find out the location of the Chaos Emeralds with the Visual Mind-Reader Link, we get an even more humiliating defeat! Being beaten by furry animals and robots is truly the most embarrassing defeat a Martian could ever experience!"

He then suddenly received an incoming call from somebody. He pressed a button on the control panel and he answered the call.

"Hello?" he asked.

"Nyder! It's Diablo!" came the voice of Diablo "I'm fleeing from the place I was warped to, I require picking up now!"

"I'll get to it immediately sir." said Nyder, setting the ship's course for where Diablo was right now.

If he had those Chaos Cluster fragments on him right now then he could just as easily warp the ship over to where Diablo was and pick him up but he didn't have them thanks to Sally destroying them so he had to do it the long way. At least the Martian ship was fast so he wouldn't be too long in picking them up. Trouble was, he'd have more than just Diablo to pick up for all the Martians that had been sent abroad were retreating from their destinations and they were all going to return to the ship in shame and defeat for they had all been defeated by the Mobians sent to stop them…

Meanwhile, the Royal Fighters had all returned back home to Royal HQ and the moment they had returned home, Sally, Nicole, Vector and Espio rushed Scott, Kiara and Charmy to the medical room to get some rest and medical treatment. All three of them were still hurting from their torture earlier and they all had bloodied wrists from being held aloft by them with chains wrapped around them. They were all alive at least and their injuries would heal sometime soon. Vector and Espio were comforting Charmy right now, Jessica was by Scott's side and Thomas was by Kiara's side. There were some tearful moments between them all but that was because of how happy they all were to see each other again and to see each other

all alive too. While they rested, Sally started receiving calls from the Royal Fighters that had been sent abroad to fight the Martians attacking seven different places all other the globe. They were all requests to come back home for their mission had been completed. Sally had asked them all to hang on a minute for she was occupied at the moment. After answering all the calls, Sally turned to all the Royal Fighters.

"Well team, we've had a tense day today…but we've made it through to the end once again." said Sally brightly "We've managed to save our captured friends and they're on a steady road to recovery. They'll be fine again in a few days time and they'll be fighting again soon. We've also managed to get our satellites back and thanks to Nicole, Eggman can never hack into them again."

Everybody applauded Nicole for her hard work and bravery in doing such a task. Nicole just graciously curtseyed and smiled with pleasure.

"And Shadow and Rouge here tell me that a Martian named Myra hate the Martian's way of life and is hoping to turn against them." continued Sally "Shadow's given her his communicator device so she can wear it and allow us to hear what the Martians will be up to next. I'm not sure how you ended up coming to trust her Shadow for she could easily be lying but I will commend you on your humanity and giving her a chance. We wouldn't have been so kind if that had been either of us in that scenario."

"Thank you your highness." said Shadow "And if you're wondering why Myra put up a decent fight despite being on our side, it was just to keep up appearances for she doesn't want the Martians to know yet that she's betraying them. I can assure you she's not lying to me and Rouge, her words were as honest as anything and I could tell by the tone in her voice when she said those words that she meant them. Myra's a good Martian who just wants to escape the peace-hating life and we're going to help her do that."

The Royal Fighters murmured amongst each other as Shadow said that.

"So as it seems, we have an unexpected but very fortunate infiltrator

that will help us stay one step ahead of the Martians." said Sally brightly "Our victory is ascertain with this "Myra" willingly helping us beat her own kind. I am a bit disappointed that Nyder managed to find the location of the Chaos Emeralds by scanning Charmy's mind though but we have a solution to that problem."

"When the others get back, we will set up defences around AngelIsland and protect the emeralds from the Martians…no matter the cost." explained Nicole "Knuckle will be very happy to get such an assignment I think."

The Royal Fighters all nodded agreeably.

"We agree on that." said Espio "We've heard all about Knuckles and how fiercely he guards AngelIsland from invaders."

"I KNOW how fiercely he guards AngelIsland from invaders." added Rouge coyly "I've experienced Knuckles and his wrath when trying to steal from him in the past. Those Martians won't get past him at all."

"I bet they won't." said Sally with a smile "Now then, there's only one thing left to do. Welcome our comrades, Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Cream, Cosmo, Shade, Wilson, Mandy, Geoffrey, Bunnie, Ruben, Silver & Blaze all home for they've all contacted me and told me they've completed their missions and wish to come home. First to come home shall be Sonic & Tails."

With that said, Sally flicked the Super Warp Ring up into the air and it opened up a portal between Royal HQ and Holoska. The cold wind of Holoska began to blow into Royal HQ, making everybody feel chilly as a draught seeped in. Sonic and Tails would hopefully see the ring and come through it and back into Royal HQ. Once all the heroes from abroad were back home, they could all come back together and kick the Martians out of Mobius once and for all. But that wasn't going to be as easy as it looked for something was coming to Mobius. Something that could turn the tables quite easily in the Martian's favour…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 127-133 to see what's happening all over the world**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 102**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 120-125**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 115**

******* See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 83**

Rival Origins

Rival Origins

The Martian Invasion Epilogue

Takes between Stories 136 & 137 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

(This Tales from Mobius Chapter is a stand-alone story and not an arc so no parts for this one)

The rest of the day had been marvellous for the Mobians. No sooner had the insidious Grand Warlord Tyrahko been defeated and wiped out once and for all and all the Martians had been sentenced to exile in the void by Super Sonic, Super Shadow, Super Silver and Burning Blaze*, the Mobians had all decided to organize a celebration party to celebrate the defeat of the Martians. This had been their THIRD overall victory in a battle with aliens over the past few weeks. They'd dealt with the Devatrons after a few heavy set-backs**, then they dealt with the Black Arms shortly after *** and now they had just dealt with the Martians. Hopefully, this would be the LAST TIME aliens ever invaded Mobius (just a little hint to you readers…it is). At the moment, things were getting back to normal. Dr. Eggman was back into hiding so no need to worry about him for the moment, no other villains like Scourge & Fiona, Team Diamond or Blizzard the Hedgehog were out to cause trouble as of now and no other aliens were invading Mobius so the rest of the day was going peacefully for them all. The evening had arrived and the party had been set-up after a while of getting things out. There was a row of tables with lots of food to eat, the radios had been set-up and disco-lights had been stationed all outside of Royal HQ. Balloons had been set-up all around and were all nicely inflated so they floated up nicely, livening up the place and making it very colourful. Music blared loudly from the radios and the happy Mobians danced along merrily to the playing music. The tunes that were playing had great beats to them and got the Mobians in the mood for a dance. Some Mobians just sat down and talked to each other or sat down

and ate what was on offer at the buffet. Sonic was talking to fellow Chaotix member Charmy Bee and two fellow Royal Fighters, Scott the Lynx and Kiara the Cheetah, about what had just happened earlier this afternoon.

"So then Tyrahko gets out this big, beefy sword which he lamely named "The Solar Sabre" and he gives me, Shadow, Silver and Blaze a right run for our money." explained Sonic, a chilli-dog clenched tightly in his hand and staining his glove with chilli-sauce as he told the story "This sword of his has fire, water, wind, rock and acid powers and can even change gravity! But with help from a Martian named Myra, who actually hated the Martian way of life, we managed to stop Tyrahko and smash open his armour! Once we broke that stupid armour, he ended up dissolving into nothing and that was the end of him. As for the others, we sent them into the void where they'll spend the rest of their lives and hopefully some of the other baddies we've tossed into the void like Perfect Chaos or Imperator Ix will deal with them."

"Wow, that's amazing!" cried Scott "Really wish stupid Nyder didn't torture me so much I had to miss out on all the action! I did see some of the fight through the window though but everything was so dazzling and fast that I just couldn't keep up with you all!"

"Yeah, in super-form I'm lightning fast aren't I?" chuckled Sonic "I'm so sorry to hear what you three suffered through by the way."

"It's OK dude." said Kiara "We're recovering just nicely anyway. Although my waist still feels sore…" she grumbled, rubbing her bandaged waist tenderly "…that shock he gave us was horrible."

"I'll bet it was." said Sonic affectionately "At least you're getting better and the Martians are gone so they can't hurt us anymore."

"I'll say!" said Charmy, buzzing around happily "I'm so glad we won again! Whee! We Royal Fighters are unstoppable! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, he's definitely much better now." chuckled Sonic as Charmy flew past the buffet table and pinched a bowl of corn chips "But that's Charmy for you, he recovers quite quickly for a little guy. Espio and Vector often tell me he's so happy and hyper that even serious

injuries have a tough time making him sit still."

"I believe that, but I like him." said Scott "He seems like a fun kid to be around. Jessica, Taran and Felix think he's funny."

"So Sonic, what do you think you'll be up to next?" asked Kiara curiously.

"Oh I'll just be stomping on Eggman again, especially since Nicole found out where his base is, and maybe stopping other villains like Scourge and that traitor Fiona." said Sonic, taking a bite out of his chilli-dog "Speaking of those two, I wonder where they've been? I haven't seen them since that whole fiasco with the Chaos Clusters last year****. You'd think they just upped and vanished or something."

"Let's not worry about villains now pal." said Scott "Let's just enjoy this wicked party for now."

"Oh yes, let's." said Sonic, licking his lips to clean them of the chilli-sauce that spread around them after he had taken that bite.

"Hey Sonic! We need you on the dance floor!" squealed Amy Rose, grabbing Sonic by the arm and pulling him towards the dancing Mobians.

"Amy, at least let me put my chilli-dog down!" yelped Sonic as he was helplessly dragged onto the dance-floor.

But Amy took no notice, she just pulled Sonic to where the other Mobians were having a good dance and tempted him to start joining in. His best friend, the twin-tailed fox Tails, chuckled slightly as Sonic was forced to participate in the dancing (and as we all know, Sonic break-dances). Tails then turned back to the buffet table and he licked his lips hungrily as he eyed a plate full of pork pies.

"Oh yum! I love pork pies!" said Tails happily "I may have to nick a few of these before the others get them…"

With that said, he grabbed a pork pie and eagerly took a bite out of it. The taste of the pie was legendary. It was so delicious that Tails just couldn't help but loudly go "Mmmm" as his taste buds danced

ecstatically with joy with the bite of pork pie grinding up in his mouth. As Tails swallowed the bit he'd taken, he took another bite and made sure he savoured the flavour of the delicious pie. He had not had one of those for a while and they were among his favourites foods (along with mint candy and chocolate of course) so he was quite happy to be having some. Tails finished off the pie he had just started eating and he instantly grabbed another one. But before he could shove it into his mouth and start chomping away on the succulent pie, something in the corner of his eye stopped him and he looked to his right. He saw that somebody was not enjoying the party. And that somebody was the love of his life, the only alien life-form that had come to Mobius and was welcome to walk the very surface of the planet. And that alien-life form was the one and only Cosmo the Seedrian. Rather than dancing and feasting like the others were doing, she was sitting alone in total isolation, completely out of the lights and away from the music, her lonely presence surrounded by a field of shadows as the sun began to set and the darkness began to creep out into the world, meaning night time was coming. Tails lowered the pork pie and his heart sank. How was it that this was such a happy moment for the Mobians and yet Cosmo, the one person who hated the Martians with all her heart and deserved vengeance for what they had done to her, was a melancholy, miserable little girl right now? One would think Cosmo would be the first person to be celebrating the end of the Martians! But Tails knew what might possibly be on Cosmo's mind and he decided to see if he could cheer his girlfriend up.

"Oh no…Cosmo's moping." said Tails sadly "It pains me to see her looking so sad. I don't blame her though for what's happened to her recently. I'll see if I can cheer her up."

So with that idea in mind, Tails put the pork pie back down on the buffet table and he wandered over to the miserable little Seedrian that had isolated herself from the others. Tails dearly loved Cosmo and seeing her sad made him feel sad, even though this was supposed to be a happy time for them all. He walked up beside Cosmo and put a hand on her shoulder. Cosmo instantly snapped out of her thoughts and gasped in surprise. She turned around quickly only to see it was Tails standing there and looking kindly at her.

"Hello Cosmo." said Tails briskly.

"Oh my goodness…you scared me to death Tails!" gasped Cosmo, panting a hand over her chest "I guess I was so deep in thought, I didn't hear you coming."

"Sorry about that Cosmo." said Tails, sitting down next to the Seedrian "I should have caught your attention first."

"It's OK Tails." said Cosmo "No need to apologize. So, why have you come to me?"

"I saw you looking miserable Cosmo and I just had to see what was wrong." said Tails affectionately "We're having this party to celebrate a grand thing, the defeat of the Martians and their subsequent exile to the void. The Martians are the ones that took your life away and then eventually your whole planet and race, you should be celebrating their defeat with us."

"I know I should be happy about all this Tails…but I'm not." muttered Cosmo gloomily "I can't feel happy right now. While I am glad the Martians are gone for good and Myra will be re-shaping the peace-loving ones back on Mars, it doesn't change a thing. I'm still the last of my kind, I still have no planet to go home to, my kind are still dead. As much as I've wanted the Martians to be punished for their actions, I still feel like I have a deep wound in my heart. I don't feel complacent in anyway. No wonder they say "Revenge solves nothing" even though I didn't want to get revenge on the Martians anyway, just have them get their comeuppance. Oh Tails…I don't think I'll ever be happy again after what the Martians have done to me!"

And what followed those heart-wrenching words were a loud, miserable sob from the poor Seedrian. Cosmo held her head in her hands and cried into them. Cosmo's sobs really made Tails feel like his heart was about to tear in two. He couldn't stand to see Cosmo sad, especially as he really loved her so Tails decided to comfort her. As Cosmo sobbed into her hands, Tails put his arms around the Seedrian and hugged her softly, his right hand on her head and stroking her leafy hair. Tails didn't say anything to Cosmo for a minute, he just allowed her to have a good cry for a minute while

also hugging her to ease her discomfort. After a minute of crying, Cosmo stopped and she looked up graciously at Tails.

"Thank you Tails." she sniffed, wiping her eyes dry "I needed a hug right now, especially from someone as cuddly and warm as you."

"Aw…heh, heh, heh…you're welcome Cosmo." said Tails, blushing a little "It's always my pleasure to lift you up when you're down Cosmo. You mean a lot to me and I will go out of my way to make your life as happy as possible. Believe me when I say that, I mean every word I say to you."

Cosmo beamed happily.

"You're so wonderful to me Tails." said Cosmo sweetly "I really wish I knew why you're so kind to me though. Is it something I've done?"

"It's nothing at all." said Tails, stroking Cosmo's back "It's simply the fact that you're the most wonderful girl I've ever met and I just want to make you as happy as I can. It maybe a little harder given the recent events but…"

"Tails, just hearing the wonderful words you've spoken to me has brightened me up." said Cosmo, stroking the white fur on Tails' chest "You've made me much happier already. Thank you."

"Aw shucks…you're more than welcome my little flower." said Tails, unable to believe he'd said that out loud and without making a fool of himself "I'm so glad I'm making you happier again. But there's one thing Martian related I must ask you. Sorry to spoil the mood but I really need to ask you this and then after that, I promise I won't bring the Martians up ever again."

"Oh, OK. What is it?" asked Cosmo curiously.

"I'm really sorry to ask this but…why did Marik hate you so much?" asked Tails "What have you done to him to make him loathe you like there's no tomorrow? His grudge on you has always baffled me and he states he has a reason but he wasn't gonna bother telling us. Maybe you can tell me what the deal between you and Marik was?"

Cosmo's face fell as Tails asked him that and she broke up the hug

with him. Just as she was beginning to cheer up, she suddenly feel back into depression again and all because of that question. Tails felt guilty and instantly started stammering.

"Oh I-I-I'm s-sorry I a-a-asked Cosmo. I-I-If y-y-you don't w-want to talk a-a-about it, it-it…"

Cosmo just raised a finger and pressed against Tails' lips, shutting him up instantly.

"It's fine Tails. You have every right to know about this since this is a thing that's been at your mind a lot." said Cosmo softly, taking her finger away from Tails' lips "I do wonder why you've never asked me this before though."

"I didn't really want to in fear of upsetting you." said Tails "And also I didn't think I'd really need to ask but it's been bothering me so much that I just had to finally ask. Much like how I'm dying to know why the mysterious Sora Sumdac seems so familiar to me." he added, remembering when Sora helped stop the Region of Rebellious Reptiles from ruining the Annual Acorn Awards last year and he felt like he knew her.

"I see." said Cosmo, curling her legs up til her knees were against her chest and wrapping her arms around them "Well then, it is time I told you the story of how Marik and I became enemies. Our rivalry started because of an accident. An accident that I am both happy and regretful of causing. An accident…that claimed the life of one of his uncles…"

Greengate, Year 2142 AD Mobius time, a whole week before the evacuation of the Seedrian children…

It was the eve of the war with the Martians and the Seedrians. The Martians had invaded the peaceful, prosperous world of Greengate and were seeking to raze it to no end and force the citizens into becoming like them, war-loving and monstrous. When the invasion had begun, Grand Warlord Diablo had ordered a global surrender from the Seedrians everywhere but the rulers of Greengate, Lucas

and his wife Earthia, had refused to back down and instead, decided to fight against the Martians and expel them from Greengate. Lucas had become the powerful warrior known only as "Dark Oak" and he led the Seedrian armies into battle. The armies consisted of those willing to sacrifice their pacifist ways for the greater good whereas those who wished to remain peaceful stayed in the palace with Earthia. The Seedrian armies and the Martian armies had been at this conflict for two months now and it seemed that it was going anywhere for the moment. The only real thing of note that had happened for those two months was the fact the landscape was beginning to get torn up and become a wasteland devoid of plant life, not helped by the fact the Martians had a plant-killing toxin known as "Toxic Marsroth" to get rid of the plant life in order to make the battle easier and to get the plants out of the way. It was also done to dampen the Seedrian's spirits since they loved plant-life and seeing plant life get killed was too much for so of them. But right now, there were worse things to worry about then simply dead plants. For at this very moment, the cruel and dangerous Martian Silas, brother of the demonic Marik the Martian, had managed to capture two Seedrian children. One was Cosmo and the other was her big sister Galaxina. Silas had sneaked into the palace during an ambush and had kidnapped the two Seedrians from their bedrooms (no they were not in bed asleep, just sitting on the bed and talking to each other) behind Earthia's back. Now he'd returned to the Martian ship with the two children bound, gagged & blindfolded and draped on his shoulders. He looked somewhat fed-up with this though although that might be because he was carrying two children at once and was doing this by himself. His brother Marik was supposed to be helping him with this but, given how they hate each other, Marik had left Silas to carry the two captives on his own just to wind him up (he's such a lovely brother isn't he?). As of now, Silas had entered the Martian ship and had taken the two Seedrians to the dungeon. He took off their blindfolds since he had arrived on the ship and didn't need to stop them from seeing anymore. To his annoyance, Marik the Martian was standing there waiting for him, a big smirk on his face and his hands behind his back.

"Hello Silas, how was your burden?" he snickered, his face the embodiment of derisiveness "I do hope it wasn't too heavy for you! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" he doubled over cackling maniacally and he

slapped his knee with his right hand, the very hand that would later become a cybernetic hand a week later…

"Very funny jerk!" snarled Silas, throwing Cosmo and Galaxina down onto the floor and stomping towards his loathsome brother.

The two captives groaned behind their gags in pain as they hit the floor very hard. Cosmo and Galaxina lifted their heads up and watched as Silas decided to, as usual, have a hissy fit with Marik again. The two bickered worse then even the most awful of sibling rivalries and that was mainly because of their positions. Marik ranked higher than Silas simply because Diablo prefers Marik over him, even though Silas is older and Silas forever resented Marik for his position in the army. That is, next in line to the throne as Grand Warlord. Because of this, the two argued even at the most inappropriate of times.

"I don't see why you had to abandon me and leave me to carry the two twerps when we both agreed that we would go in together and kidnap them!" shouted Silas "You could have botched the mission up Marik!"

"Oh lay off Silas!" grumbled Marik, not in the mood for another argument "You may be flaccid in the brain department but even you can sneak inside and kidnap two Seedrian kids unnoticed, it's not like we gave you a difficult task to do!"

"That's not the bloody point you numbskull!" snarled Silas, getting dead close into Marik's face "I know I can carry out a task as easily as that but what if I got caught?! What if I needed back up and I didn't get any because you, you selfish, arrogant little jerk, weren't there to provide me any! We agreed I'd get the kids and you would watch my back!"

"As if I'd ever watch YOUR back you little germ!" growled Marik, pushing Silas out of his face "I'd sooner set fire to my sleeping quarters then by your little bodyguard! I only made that deal just to get you to do the dirty work for me!"

"So you used me then?!" shouted Silas "No wonder I hate you so much you miserable excuse for a brother! You treat me like I'm

some kind of slave to you just because your dad's preferred child and next in line to the throne!"

"You know what dad said, I get to treat any Martians that rank lower than me anyway I bloody well like!" bellowed Marik "The high-ranking Martians get to treat the lower Martians how they see fit and I'm treating you the way you should be treated, like a miserable servant who needs to stop being jealous of me and KNOW HIS PLACE FOR ONCE!"

"Why you slithering little…you're going down for that!" screamed Silas.

"Don't you dare threaten me!" snarled Marik, swiping his arms at Silas and sending an energy wave sweeping into his face.

Silas was thrown across the room and sent crashing into the dungeon door. Silas groaned in pain and lay down at the foot of the door, wondering which part of him to rub better. Cosmo and Galaxina trembled in fright, scared at what they were witnessing and the shouting match that was going on. They were desperate to leave this place at once. Marik stomped up to Silas and he grabbed him by the collar of his coat. He pinned him against the door and glowered into his eyes.

"I'll have no more nonsense from you, or you will find yourself answering to mum or dad!" growled Marik, his voice as threatening as a growling lion's "And we all know what happens to those who mistreat the next in line don't we?!"

"Yes…Marik…" said Silas weakly as Marik tightened his grip on him.

Marik nodded but his face was still grim and dark as he lowered Silas down onto the floor. He then let go of Silas and left him to lie against the door as he turned around and wandered over to Cosmo and Galaxina.

"So sorry about all that you two, brotherly arguments, you know what they're like." he muttered casually "Anyways, I'm sure you two will delight in knowing why you are here."

The two Seedrians shook their heads, not really eager to know why they were here. Marik grinned at them and he decided to tell them anyway. He removed their gags and told them the reason for their presences in the ship.

"We are desperate to defeat you Seedrians, especially as you have proven to be much tougher than we initially thought so we decided to capture somebody important for two different things." explained Marik "One: For hostages purposes and blackmail. And two: So you two can tell us what is the next move for the Seedrians. I'm sure you two know everything since you're the daughters of Dark Oak and Earthia."

"Oh Marik please, we uh…" stuttered Cosmo timidly.

"We don't know a goddamn thing so let us go and leave us alone you tiny little freak!" screamed Galaxina.

"You're not in a position to refer to my height, especially as your size scarcely exceeds mine!" snapped Marik, backhanding Galaxina down onto her side "Now, what is the next move for the Seedrians?! What is their next plan of attack?!"

"Marik please! We really don't know what you want to know!" pleaded Cosmo "Please, believe me!"

"As if I'm going to believe the lies of a piece of filth like you!" retorted Marik, grabbing Cosmo by the neck and throttling her "Now tell me what I want to know and I may not have to rip anything off of you!"

"Leave Cosmo alone!" cried Galaxina defensively "Interrogate me instead!"

"Gladly." said Marik, throwing Cosmo down onto the floor and yanking Galaxina up onto her knees "Tell me what the Seedrian's next move is and I will let you two twits live long enough to watch your kind perish!"

"Get shot!" snapped Galaxina, head-butting Marik in the forehead.

Marik let go of Galaxina and he winced in pain. His head felt like someone had just hit it with a hammer. Marik rubbed his head better

and he was about to unleash hell on Galaxina until he suddenly had a better idea for what he could do instead. He lowered his fists and he grinned maliciously at Galaxina.

"Oh I'm not going to get shot…I'm going to call somebody." said Marik, taking a communicator out of his pocket and punching in some numbers "And that somebody is somebody who will whip you two twerps into place."

He put the communicator to his ear and spoke into it.

"Hello? Uncle? It's me Marik. I have a job for you." he said "A job that would require your brilliant new invention. Would you care to come down here to the dungeon please? Yes? Great. Thank you, bye for now."

After that phone call he put the communicator back into his pocket.

"Wh-wh-who d-d-did y-y-you j-j-j-just call?" asked Cosmo nervously.

"Oh…please, oh please, not your uncle Count Drago!" said Galaxina worriedly "Oh please, don't tell me you called him!"

"No, no, no, of course I didn't." purred Marik softly "I called another uncle of mine. He's an expert scientist and inventor and he has a new invention he's been itching to try out. And I'm sure he'll be glad to have you two as his test subjects."

"Oh no…he's n-n-n-not g-g-going to-to-to…e-experiment on us?! Is h-h-he?!" shrieked Cosmo.

"In a way…yes." said Marik, grinning darkly at his captives "And he should be here any moment…now!"

Then, as if right on cue, the dungeon door opened up and in walked a huge Martian. Silas scuttled out of the way as the Martian strode proudly into the room. The Martian was enormous at a staggering six-foot-eight and he was truly one terrifying monster of a Martian. He wore battle armour like any Martian does and it was uniquely designed and sculpted with an energy diamond in the chest area but what added to this Martian's appearance was the fact his entire left arm was mechanical, no trace of organic matter anywhere on it. The

arm was solid and powerful and had two claws on the knuckles. He wore a helmet with four prongs on it and a singular red-eye built into it that concealed his face and made him look like a one-eyed robot. His right arm had a gauntlet on it and his claws were blood-red and sharp. He wore a metal backpack like structure on his back with two "wing" structures sticking up from the top and it wore heavy metal boots. His foot steps made the floor tremble as he walked into the room. He was carrying some kind of machine in his left arm. Cosmo and Galaxina gasped in horror at the Martian whereas Marik and Silas just grinned gleefully.

"Wow Marik, you called just the right person!" laughed Silas.

"Thank you." said Marik casually "Now Cosmo and Galaxina, daughters of Earthia and Dark Oak, allow me to introduce you to my uncle Dungar. He will be the one to get you two to talk and tell us what we want to know."

Dungar just looked down at the two Seedrians and wondered what the deal with them was. The creepy thing about Dungar is that whenever he moves, he has a little twitch to him that makes him seem somewhat robotical, even though the only robotical thing about him was his left arm. Cosmo and Galaxina trembled with fear. Dungar scared the two half to death with his imposing stature and threatening appearance. Marik smiled at their fear and he spoke to his sinister uncle.

"Uncle Dungar, these two are Cosmo and Galaxina, the off-spring cretins of Dark Oak and Earthia. I have kidnapped them so that you can test your new invention, the Visual Mind-Reader Link, on them and see what information their puny brains have for us." explained Marik.

"Hey! I'm the one who kidnapped them you big fat liar!" wailed Silas.

"Shut up and get out of here!" snarled Marik "Uncle Dungar does not wish to have his presence cursed by your unwanted presence!"

Silas just scowled at Marik and stormed out of the dungeon, the door closing behind him as he left in a huff. Dungar watched Silas leave but he said nothing about it. Dungar was a pretty sheltered

person when it came to emotions. Even his nephews didn't provoke emotions of any kind, making him quite dead-pan and emotionless. I doubt he'd even care if Marik, his own nephew, was to get impaled through the heart by a sword right now. Dungar then looked back over to Marik, his helmet's single red eye glowing marvellously.

"What? Silas is a pain! Even you don't like him Uncle Dungar!" snapped Marik "I was doing you a favour! Anyway, would you care to get our guests comfortable while you prepare to use the Visual Mind-Reader Link on them?"

Dungar nodded and he put the machine in his hand down. That was an early prototype for the Visual Mind-Reader Link. Much different to the one you've seen Sycranna and Count Nyder use respectively on their victims. This one was a handheld machine with a screen on it that was carried around and could be placed anywhere. It still had the helmet of course. Dungar strode over to Cosmo and he picked her up. He cut her binds to pieces, freeing her arms for the moment, and he carried Cosmo over to a restraint bed. He lay her down with her arms beside her and he restrained her to the bed with straps. Dungar then proceeded to do the same with Galaxina. He strapped her to another restraint bed and the two Seedrian children squirmed in their binds.

"Ugh! Hurrgh, grrr, ugh…you let us outta these things right now you one-eyed freak!" shouted Galaxina.

"Correction: What lies behind this helmet are two perfectly functional eyes." droned Dungar, his deep, monotone voice like a robot thanks to his helmet modifying it "So your claim of me being a "one-eyed freak" is most incorrect little child."

"Whatever, let us go right now or I'll bash your heads in!" screamed Galaxina.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! A Seedrian child dares to threaten my marvellous uncle?!" laughed Marik "What a lark! Now uncle, let's show these two cretins what your new invention can do!"

"I think we guessed by the fact it's called a "Visual Mind-Reader Link" genius!" snapped Galaxina "You're going to read our minds

aren't you? Don't care really, we have no information for you."

"We shall see about that." said Marik "Hey Dungar, use it on Cosmo first. "Youngest goes first" as they say."

"No, please, don't use it on me!" whimpered Cosmo.

"Leave my little sister alone you heathens! Use it on me instead!" cried Galaxina.

"Do not worry, if the child does not harbour information of any kind of use to us, you will be next." droned Dungar, strolling over beside Cosmo and preparing the Visual Mind-Reader Link for use.

He bent down on one knee and raised the attached helmet, ready to put it on the terrified Cosmo's head. Cosmo screamed in pain as she was shocked into unconsciousness by the helmet and she passed out onto the bed she was restrained in. Now that was done, Dungar switched on the Visual-Mind-Reader Link and the screen buzzed into life. All of Cosmo's thoughts from birth to now were being displayed on the screen and Dungar watched it closely, wondering it there was any information that Cosmo harboured for the Martians. He and Marik watched quite a lot of footage for quite a while but to their misfortune, Cosmo had no information for them. This was because whenever Earthia and Dark Oak talked tactics and plans and such, they shut Cosmo and Galaxina in their bedroom together to keep them from getting involved and to make sure that in the event of capture, they would not be able to tell the Martians anything (you know what kids are like, they blabber about anything). Dungar and Marik had noticed that Galaxina was in the room with Cosmo so they had the idea that Galaxina probably didn't know anything either so there would be no point trying the Mind-Reader Link on her. Marik sighed loudly as Dungar took the helmet off of Cosmo's head and woke her up. Cosmo gasped for breath as she was woken up form her abrupt unconsciousness.

"Well, we know the machine works but you yielded no information for us!" growled Marik "You were a total and complete waste of time Cosmo and we found out from the footage we watched that you and Galaxina were shut up in your rooms to prevent you from over-hearing what your parents get up to so we know that you're both

useless."

"I-I-I d-d-d-did t-t-try t-t-t-to t-t-t-tell you." gibbered Cosmo "Y-y-y-you sh-sh-should l-l-l-isten t-t-to me n-n-n-next time."

"Shut up!" snarled Marik "I really can't believe you and Galaxina don't know anything about the Seedrian's plans and battle tactics. I really thought you would have given your dad is the leader of the Seedrian army!"

Dungar put the machine down on the ground and he transformed his cybernetic arm into a deadly plasma-cannon arm that could blow anything in its path to pieces. He pointed it directly at Cosmo.

"You are no longer of use." droned Dungar, getting ready to execute Cosmo and soon afterwards, Galaxina.

"No, you can't! Please don't kill me!" whimpered Cosmo, struggling wildly in her binds.

"Don't hurt Cosmo! Kill me first!" screamed Galaxina as Dungar prepared to fire at Cosmo.

"Uncle, uncle! Wait, wait, wait, wait!" cried Marik, pushing him aside a little "Don't kill the little brats! They still have use to us! I kidnapped them to use as blackmail as well as interrogation! We can use them to draw out Dark Oak and lure him into a trap!"

Dungar transformed his arm cannon back to normal and glared at Marik with his helmet's glowing one eye. Cosmo stopped trembling and she looked worriedly at Dungar, wondering what his response was going to be.

"I always found simply killing the enemy while they're defenceless to be the most…logical choice of action." droned Dungar "But whatever you say. I am not permitted to second-talk the Grand Warlord's son."

"Thank you Dungar." said Marik, grinning evilly "I promise you though that once Dark Oak's been disposed of, you can finish off Cosmo and Galaxina."

"Your proposal is…accepted." said Dungar slowly "And you can

indulge yourself in Dark Oak's demise."

"Indeed so Uncle." said Marik brightly "I have a feeling I'm going to enjoy using these two as hostages to lure Dark Oak to his doom."

"You monsters, you will not trap daddy so easily!" cried Galaxina "He'll rescue us and kick your sorry butts!"

"Dungar, please knock her out, her attitude's starting to irritate me!" grumbled Marik.

Dungar obeyed and he transformed his arm into a cannon arm again. His cannon arm had settings and he was going to set it to stun mode so he could knock Galaxina out and silence her rather tomboyish attitude. He pointed the cannon at Galaxina and prepared to knock her out. Galaxina screamed and struggled furiously in her binds.

"No, please, don't shoot me! Don't shoot me!" screeched Galaxina "No, no, NO!"

But before Dungar could fire his cannon and send Galaxina into unconsciousness the dungeon door was suddenly thrown off its hinges and in burst Dark Oak, Red Pine and Yellow Zelkova! The three Seedrian warriors had managed to find the Martian ship and were storming the place. Red Pine and Yellow Zelkova had an easy time considering their brute strength and battle prowess and Dark Oak's sufficient speed and skill had granted him an easy time in getting on the ship. Dungar wheeled around in surprise and he switched his cannon arm to blast mode. He began firing madly at the three Seedrian warriors with his cannon arm but he missed every shot and Dark Oak uppercut him away from Cosmo. He ripped the straps around her wrists out of their sockets and freed Cosmo from the bed. He ran over to Galaxina and proceeded to do the same to her. Now Cosmo and Galaxina were free, they hugged their father graciously.

"Daddy, you came to save us!" cried Cosmo happily "I knew you would!"

"Of course I came to save you two." said Dark Oak happily, his voice

modified by the helmet "You two are my little angels and I would never leave you to be eviscerated by these savages."

Unfortunately, the little reunion was cut short by Dungar getting up onto his feet and blasting Dark Oak in the torso. The blast sent Dark Oak hurling backwards across the room and he crashed head-first into the wall. Dungar strode ominously towards Diablo, his cannon-arm charging up, ready to make another shot. Yellow Zelkova ran in and attempted to help Dark Oak but Dungar just blasted him away and sent him hurling into the wall. Red Pine ran in to stop Dungar but Marik jumped up to Red Pine and kicked him backwards, sending him falling down onto his back. Dungar strode up to Dark Oak and pointed the cannon-arm at him, ready to shoot him.

"Your ill-executed ambush was most illogical." droned Dungar "Now you will perish Dark Oak."

Dark Oak however just picked himself up and punched Dungar backwards. Dungar stumbled backwards but he remained standing and he transformed his arm back to normal. Dark Oak punched Dungar in the face but Dungar retaliated with a slash to the face with his fist claws. The claws left deep cuts on Dark Oak's helmet. Dark Oak uppercut Dungar in the face and then roundhouse kicked him backwards but Dungar remained on his feet and just rammed Dark Oak in the chest with his shoulder. Dark Oak stumbled backwards and Dungar pinned him against the wall with his left arm. He clasped his hands around Dark Oak's throat and prepared to throttle him to death. Dark Oak managed to save himself though by kneeing Dungar in the gut and then backhanding him onto his side. Dark Oak then pulled a weapon out of his cloak pocket. It looked like a firework but it was made of steel and had a long, sharp steel pole that looked like it could penetrate any substance. Dark Oak switched the weapon on and he prepared to plunge into Dungar's shoulder but Dungar jumped back onto his feet, snatched the weapon off of him and threw it outside the dungeon and into the corridor. What followed was the weapon going off with a tremendous explosion that raged down the corridor. That weapon was an exploding stick and they were powerful weapons to use in battle. Dungar transformed his arm into a cannon arm again and he blasted Dark Oak into the wall once again.

"Your weapon of choice is most commendable." complimented Dungar "But even that will not save you in this battle."

"We'll see about that savage!" growled Dark Oak, getting out another exploding stick.

He tried to get it ready but Dungar ran in and grabbed the weapon. He snatched it out of Dark Oak's hands and tossed it over his shoulder. The weapon landed in front of Cosmo, who gasped in surprise and picked up the weapon. Dungar and Dark Oak continued to pummel each other furiously as Cosmo watched on. Dark Oak tried to push past Dungar and get his weapon back but Dungar grabbed Dark Oak by the neck and threw him back. Dark Oak picked himself up and clawed Dungar across the face. He then punched Dungar in the singular optic in his helmet. The punch did no damage but Dungar did stumble quite a bit after that powerful punch. Then Dark Oak and Dungar ended up grappling hands with each other and they pushed on each other, trying to overpower the other and win the grappling match. Cosmo watched helplessly as her dad fought hard against the sinister, robotic-armed Martian and wondered what do to.

"Galaxina, we have to help dad! What can we do?" asked Cosmo frantically.

"That weapon you've got is an exploding stick Cosmo!" said Galaxina "Throw it back to daddy so he can use it on Dungar and fast! He'll need it!"

"OK." said Cosmo "But what happens if I twist it like this?" she added, noticing an arrow that was circling around the tip of the weapon, obviously indicating that particular section rotated in someway.

"No, don't do that!" cried Galaxina "You'll…"

Too late, Cosmo rotated the top section of the stick and got it ready to go off! The exploding stick started beeping furiously as it was activated and Cosmo panicked.

"Oh no! I've turned it on!" she cried "I have to throw it away before it

blows me up!"

With that said she threw the exploding stick away in blind panic…so blind a panic that she didn't realize she had thrown it directly towards Dungar and Dark Oak! Dark Oak saw the weapon heading towards him and he retreated instantly, running out of the dungeon and waiting for the stick to go off. Dungar turned around and noticed the exploding stick was hurling towards him. It impaled itself into his shoulder by the sharp metal point that allowed the user to stick it into something, causing Dungar to wail in pain. He grabbed the stick and yanked it out of his shoulder…only for it to go off directly in his hand and blow him across the room with a terrific explosion! The force of the explosion tore off his robot arm and threw him into the wall with a heavy crash. The impact of the explosion and subsequent crash into the wall left Dungar in a critical condition. A condition so critical that it quickly became a fatal condition and his life started seeping away faster than somebody who's been hit by a car. Cosmo put her hands over her mouth in horror, unable to believe what she had just done. She had just fatally wounded Dungar! True she hated the Martians and didn't care what happened to them but the fact that she, Cosmo, the one who promised her mother she would never kill anything in her life had probably just killed a Martian! Marik was horrified at what he saw and he ran over to his quickly dying uncle.

"Uncle Dungar?!" shrieked Marik "Uncle Dungar?! Uncle Dungar! Speak to me, speak to me! Are you alright?! You're not gonna die are you?!"

Dungar said nothing more and he closed his eyes, the red glowing optic on his helmet fading to black. Dungar was dead. His injuries were too great and the explosion had done a number on him. Marik was so shocked at the death of Dungar that he couldn't move for the moment. Tears came to his eyes and he let them trickle down his face. He didn't sob loudly in anguish though, he just let the tears trickle down his face while he took in what had just happened. Cosmo was equally as shocked as Marik was and she couldn't move for the moment. Dark Oak ran back into the dungeon and he scooped up Cosmo and Galaxina in his arms. He, Yellow Zelkova and Red Pine ran out of the room as quickly as possible, leaving Marik behind to grieve over his fallen uncle. But as they left, Marik

got back to his feet and he stuck his head out of the door. His eyes were still streaming with tears, angry tears that is, and he roared down the corridor to Cosmo.

"COSMO!" he thundered in rage "I WILL KILL YOU FOR THIS! MARK MY WORDS YOU WILL PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO MY UNCLE! MARK MY WORDS, ***YOU. WILL. PAAAAAAAAAAAAYYYYYYY!*** *"*

Cosmo said nothing more as she was carried off out of the Martian ship by Dark Oak, shocked and terrified at what she had just done right now…

Mobius: Present Day…

"…and that is how me and Marik became sworn enemies." Cosmo finished off, her face the embodiment of glumness as she remembered that fateful day that started this whole rivalry.

Tails' jaw dropped at everything he had just heard right now. He could not believe the story that Cosmo had just recited to him. He took a moment to let all of it sink in and then he regained his thoughts.

"No…way…" gasped Tails "You…you accidentally killed one of Marik's uncles?! That's why he hates you so much?! You accidentally killed one of his uncles?!"

"I did, and I am ashamed I ever did it." said Cosmo, the tears coming to her eyes again "I promised mother I would never kill anything in my life. And I broke that promise. I killed Dungar and thus, got Marik dedicating his life to killing me in return. He never brought up the reason he hated me so much for he felt it was not worth spilling and just wanted his reason to be simple hatred."

"Cosmo, you killed Dungar by accident! You didn't break that promise you made your mother!" cried Tails "You didn't intentionally mean to kill him! And besides, it wouldn't have happened if your dad didn't have that exploding stick thingy with him so it's hardly your

fault it happened!"

"I know, but I still regret ever doing it." said Cosmo "Ever since that dreadful day, I vowed never to kill another being again, accidental or not and I have managed to keep that vow. If only the Martians had my common sense, they could have saved themselves from their much-deserved exile they've just received now."

"Yeah, the Martians sealed their own fate with their horrible way of life." muttered Tails.

He then suddenly took Cosmo's hands into his own and looked her squarely in the eyes. Cosmo looked back into Tails' eyes, only just realizing how gorgeous they were to her. Tails had eyes of sparkling blue much like she did and she really liked them.

"Cosmo, I'm sorry I made you bring up those memories." said Tails "But you never need to think about the Martians ever again. For from now on, me and my friends will give you new memories now you're permanently a citizen of Mobius. We will make your life better, we will help you get out of the ashes of your recent tragedies and we will make sure that you become happy once again. We will make you forget about the Martians and think about all the happy times you're going to have with us now. Cosmo, I will do anything for you, anything just to make you smile. I will do anything for you to make you happy and I'm doing all of this because…because…"

He paused for a moment as his heart fought to make him say the words and he finally let it out.

"I…I love you Cosmo." said Tails softly "I love you so, so much Cosmo. You're the loveliest girl I've ever met and I want to make you as happy as I possibly can, all because I love you more than life itself."

He blushed so hard thought his face was going to erupt like a volcano. Cosmo was so touched by Tails' heart-warming words that she was overwhelmed with joy. Her eyes brimmed with happy tears and a big smile spread out on her pretty face.

"Oh…oh Tails…I…I don't know what to say!" gasped Cosmo "I…I'm

delighted to hear all this! You've been so wonderful to me that…I've grown to love you too!"

With that said, she grabbed Tails by the shoulders and brought him into a loving kiss. Their lips locked and their eyes closed as the two young lovers deeply embraced each other. They wrapped their arms around each other and had a long, loving kiss with each other. They were in such an embrace that Tails even wrapped his tails around Cosmo, not really realizing he had just done so. After a minute or two, they broke up the kiss and stared dreamily into each other's eyes.

"Tails…you're the most wonderful boy I've ever met." said Cosmo softly "I'm so glad I ended up on Mobius, or I would never have met you."

"Aww, thanks Cosmo." said Tails brightly "So how do you feel now?"

"I feel so happy that…I wanna join in with the dancing." said Cosmo, beaming like a sunrise "Come on Tails, let's dance together and tell everybody that we're in love!"

"Aw Cosmo, I'll do anything for you." said Tails, getting up onto his feet and helping Cosmo up onto hers "Let's enjoy the rest of the party and dance the night away."

With that said, the happy lovers walked back over to the party and joined in with the dancing and feasting Mobians, happy that the Martians were gone and that they had nothing to worry about anymore. A story had been shared that night and a love had been revealed. This night couldn't possibly end any better. And it wasn't just Mobius that was in for a good night for Myra had arrived back on Mars and was preparing to start the Martian's new lives as peace lovers. And more importantly, the evacuees that had been sent to Bluegate to survive the war were still living their lives peacefully and now the Martians were gone, the Seedrian children would grow into adults and continue the Seedrian race. The Seedrians would never be truly gone now the Seedrians on Bluegate were in eternal peace and if Cosmo ever found out, she would be thrilled more than words could ever describe…

Footnotes:

*** We just saw that in the epic *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 136, the finale to the Martian saga**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 100-115**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 120-125**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 90-93**

And so here you have it folks, the origin of Cosmo and Marik's rivalry! What did you think to it? Bet you're all going "Awwwww" at the ending. Tune in next time on Tales from Mobius for Rouge the Bat takes the centre spotlight and a certain group of villains make their surprising return next time...

Treasure-Hunting Rivals 1

Arc 18: Treasure Hunting Rivals

Takes between Stories 136 & 137 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 1

No more than a day had passed since the defeat and exile of the Martians* and yet, as of this very moment, the notorious treasure hunter Rouge the Bat had taken to the skies and was flying off in search of her next treasure. She had taken part in the recent alien invasions such as the Devatrons**, Black Arms***, and Martians, as well as helping to save Chun-Nan from the Raiju Clan's tyranny**** and as of now, it seemed she finally had a moment of peace. Nothing was happening so far and Mobius was at a time of peace so Rouge could finally leave the Royal Fighters to their business and get back to her treasure-hunt. Before the whole Black Arms invasion has happened, she had been searching for a legendary a relic which according to description, was a golden key decorated with rubies and sapphires and rumoured to have a power of some kind. Rouge had been fascinated with the idea of finding such a relic and had been searching high and low for it for a while now. Now everything was back to normal and the Mobians were catching a break, Rouge could get back to finding this so-called "jewelled key" or whatever historians and mythologists decided it was called. She had gathered some clues in her travels and had managed to work out where the key was hidden but she had to get to the location first and she had been setting off to find that location long before even the Devatrons invaded. But other treasures had distracted her and Rouge had ended up delaying her objective, until this moment. There were no other treasures for Rouge to find right now so finding the jewelled key was her first intention, especially as she had worked it where it was. It was located in deep, dark cave in the outskirts of the Tropical Jungle and Rouge knew exactly where the cave was so the moment morning rose, she took off into the sky without even saying goodbye to anybody and flew off to the Tropical Jungle to find this jewelled

key she'd been searching for a while for. As Rouge soared through the air with a flap of her powerful wings, she spiralled around in the air, enjoying the breezing wind that blew over her and made her feel wonderful.

"Whoo!" she cried out happily "It sure feels good to be flying around once again! I've almost forgotten what it feels like to soar through the air with nothing tying you down and getting in your way!"

She stopped spiralling around and remained level as she flew on through the sky.

"While it has been fun fighting off Devatrons, Ninjas, Black Aliens and Martians, I will say it's good to FINALLY get back into treasure hunting." said Rouge brightly "I was on a really good one until all these invasions and take-overs started happening and I just had to divert from my original treasure-hunting intentions and help save the world and the oppressed in Chun-Nan. After all, life matters more than jewellery and if the world was taken over, I'd never be able to hunt any treasures so it was all for a good cause. You can be such a good girl at times Rouge, you know that?" she cooed to herself.

She flapped her wings again and ascended higher up into the sky. She looked down at the ground below, almost amazed at how high she was going and keeping an eye out to see where she was. She was still on the right path to the Tropical Jungle so the bat kept on flying forward and heading to her destination.

"When I get that treasure, I will finally have accomplished a life-long dream." said Rouge "Finding the most treasured relic all of time, the Key of Opulence. Ever since I started the treasure hunting business, I've been after that beauty of a treasure and now I'm finally going to find it. Just like my old man used to say to me…"

As Rouge said that, she suddenly began to have thoughts that dated way back to her childhood. Ten years ago in fact, when she was only eight years old…

Ten years ago: A desolate old jewellery shop in Central City…

*Central City, the largest city on Mobius before it was razed to the ground by the Egg-Fleet seven years later*****. Central City was a grand metropolis of many features including towering sky-scrapers, hi-tech facilities and crowded traffic that stretched on for miles around every corner of the city. But not every inch of Central City is marvellous and state-of-the-art like pretty much all of it is. Central City had its own run-down places too like any normal city does. In Central City, there was a whole block of closed shops, empty houses and abandoned facilities that quite frankly, made the whole block look completely out of place in comparison to the rest of the city. Not many people occupied this block of the city and thus, the buildings there were falling into a state of decay. One shop however was the exception. There was a shop with a large window displaying the inside of it as clearly as any window always does and the walls were coloured green. A red and white awning was placed above the door and windows of the shop and provided a great big shade of shadow for anyone to cool off under. The door was merely a large window with a door frame and a golden handle (the handle is actually made of gold, not just coloured gold). A sign post was bolted to the wall between the window and door and it was on hinges so it flapped around whenever the wind blew. The sign read in big fancy golden letters "Roger's Jewels". This shop was a jewellery shop and it had a marvellous amount of radiant jewels on display. There were necklaces, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds, tiaras, rings, any jewel you can possibly name and think of right now, the shop most definitely sold it. They were all on display in the big window, allowing anyone who walked past to see what was on sale. Despite being located in a run-down area of the city, the shop still managed to sell well. Some people walked up and down the block to get to the more interesting and fascinating areas of Central City and if the shop was lucky, some of those people would stop by to buy jewellery. The shop was garnering quite a reputation among the locals and was steadily increasing in popularity. But yet, it still could do with getting more customers. The owner of the shop really just blamed the location it was in, that is to say a run-down city block, and wished to move the shop to another area of the city in order to be more appealing to citizens and get more attention. And right now, that was just what the owner of the shop was planning on doing.*

Speaking of the owner, I'll introduce you to him now. The owner of the shop was named Roger the Bat. He was a beige coloured bat who looked very much like Rouge minus the eye-shadow and the hair-do of course. He had red eyes and he often wore casual t-shirts and jeans with a belt around the waist. He was quite broad and muscular too but his rather stocky appearance didn't properly suggest his personality. He was quite a friendly man with a heart bigger than his head. He was Rouge's father and was the only thing Rouge had to care for her after he and her mother had split-up due to differences of opinions and hobbies. Roger was a former archaeologist who often explored many caves and abandoned temples and old habitats that have been lost to time. Now he sold jewellery and had become quite a wealthy man as a result. Some of the jewels he sold were ancient relics and treasures he'd found on his archaeological travels. But he hadn't sold everything he'd found, he had kept some treasures for himself. Treasures he felt were too valuable to sell and treasures he felt deserved to be on display. So he kept them up in his bedroom out of the way. The shop wasn't just a place for Roger to work in, it was also his place of dwelling. The house-like appliances such as a bedroom and bathroom were up on the top floor and there was a kitchen and sitting room in the back. He and Rouge had lived here quite happily and had been quite happy selling jewels and having a good time with each other. Right now though, Roger and Rouge were in the sitting room reading a book together and talking about what the future may have to offer them. They were sitting on a big, brown leather sofa with fancy, opulent cushions and gold decals on the front of the arms with a mug of hot chocolate each sitting on the coffee table in front of them and looking at a big book together. The book they were reading was all about treasure, artefacts and relics and Rouge had been fascinated by everything she saw in the book.

"Wow daddy! These treasures look beautiful!" squealed Rouge happily.

As an eight year old, Rouge was very much like any child that age. Chipper, happy and playful. Much different from the woman she is now but more on that later. Roger just beamed at his daughter and cuddled her rightly to his side.

"Yes Rouge my love, the treasures in this book are indeed wonderful aren't they?" he chuckled "And to think that I've found most of them during my archaeological digs in my old career."

"I know and you've still got them now." said Rouge brightly "I love that "Ruby Urn" you found in Soumerca, it's so beautiful that I could just stare at it all day!"

It's not hard to guess that being the daughter of a man who dug up treasures and owns a jewellery shop is how Rouge came to be such a jewel lover. Rouge had practically grown up around jewels thanks to her father and the shop they lived in so she pretty much just naturally grew to love them. Roger stroked Rouge's head playfully, earning an adorable giggle from the little infant bat, and he picked up his mug of hot chocolate. He lifted the cup to his lips and sipped the warm, chocolaty drink that was in it. He put the mug back down and continued to talk to his daughter.

"The sad thing is though, not every treasure in the book I've managed to find." explained Roger "Some of these treasures have been lost to time and never found or found by somebody else."

He showed Rouge some pages of the book that contained treasures that he'd never managed to find. Rouge cooed at the treasures she was looking at in the book and felt pretty downhearted that those treasures had never been found or had been found by somebody else. What she wouldn't give to own everything in the book, even though her father already owned pretty much everything in the book.

"I wish we had every treasure in that book daddy." said Rouge "They'd look really good on our shelves wouldn't they?"

"They would indeed sweetheart." said Roger, stroking Rouge's hair affectionately "But it doesn't matter if we don't find every treasure that Mobius has to offer. We have enough anyway. And besides, the only treasure that matters more to me than any treasure I've ever found…is you my daughter."

"Me?" said a very confused Rouge "But daddy, I'm not a treasure. I'm not made of gold or covered in diamonds. I'm a Mobian bat like you are."

Roger chuckled at Rouge's remark.

"No dearest, I mean you're more valuable to me than even the most wonderful treasure I've ever found in my life time." said Roger "If I had to choose between my treasures and you, I would happily give away my treasures and pick you."

"Aw…thank you daddy." said Rouge, hugging her father tightly "You're the most wonderful daddy in the world."

"I'm your only daddy Rouge but thank you." said Roger, hugging her back "Now remember Rouge, jewels and treasures maybe valuable but never forget that the most valuable thing in the world is life itself. Don't dedicate it all to priceless artefacts and ancient relics. That's why I gave up archaeology, so I could have a quieter life and be able to spend more time with you."

"Don't worry daddy. I'll remember." said Rouge brightly.

"That's my little treasure." laughed Roger, playfully giving Rouge a noogie-noogie, making the little bat giggle with delight.

As Rouge giggled and wriggled around, a page of the book ended up turning over and showing off another treasure. After Roger stopped making Rouge giggle, Rouge spotted the page that had turned over and saw that it was showing off a golden key-shaped relic that was covered in rubies and sapphires. It looked incredible and Rouge was mesmerized by the very appearance of the beautiful relic.

"Wow…" she said "Daddy, what's that?"

Roger looked down at the book and looked a little surprised at what he saw.

"Oh, we must have missed a page." said Roger "I don't think you saw that yet. Anyways, this is a legendary artefact known simply as "The Key of Opulence". It is said to have belonged to a civilization that was once the richest civilization on Mobius. That was due to the power the key was rumoured to have. It is rumoured that the key grants infinite wealth to the person who owns it but nobody can be

sure on what it actually does. Nobody's sure if the key's still around now or not. There were no reports of it ever being destroyed or anything so it may still exist. I've tried finding it before but to no avail. I've given up though since my days as an archaeologist and occasional treasure hunter are over. Maybe somebody else will find it instead."

"Maybe I could find it?" suggested Rouge "When I grow up, I could probably try looking for that key."

"I wouldn't advise you on that Rouge." said Roger sternly "Treasure-hunting is a serious business nowadays, especially with that awful H.U.N.T. organization sending out all those mercenaries just to find treasures. You could get hurt or killed out there, hence more of the reason I retired."

"Oh…OK." said Rouge "At least we got our other treasures to enjoy. We'll be OK without that key."

"We will indeed dearest." said Roger with a warming smile "Especially as all the treasure I need is sitting beside me right now."

And with that, they both giggled away at that little statement.

"But in all honesty, if you ever did find that key Rouge, I would be amazed beyond words." admitted Roger "That key would look fine standing on the mantelpiece I think and I really think that if you were ever to look for the key, you'd very likely find it. You're very good at finding things after all."

Rouge just beamed. After hearing those words, Rouge decided when she was older, she was going to look for that key, regardless of the dangers out there and she would make her father proud for finding such a legendary relic that hasn't been found in ages and nobody's certain on its whereabouts…

Present Day…

"Yeah…I don't half miss my old man." Rouge murmured to herself, her face falling a little as she remembered those days "So warm, so

loving and so caring. He made me feel so good whenever he called me "his little treasure". He was so wonderful to me that I would happily give away anything I've ever found just to have him back."

Her face fell into an even gloomier expression. But she quickly shook it all off and focused back on her mission.

"But I can't let that bother me now." said Rouge "I've got that key to find and I'm gonna find it even if it kills me. I promised I'd find that key and a woman like me never goes back on her word. Tropical Jungle, here I come."

With that said, she continued flying off through the sky and heading for the Tropical Jungle where hopefully, the Key of Opulence would be found since all the clues she'd gathered over the years hinted it was probably there. Unfortunately for her…she was about to have some unwanted and unexpected company. For as she flew on through the sky, Rouge didn't notice that somebody was lurking in the clouds and watching her fly off. And that somebody was somebody she was not going to be pleased to see. That somebody was a grey-furred bat with a metallic blue life-support mask on his face and huge wings. It was none other than the nefarious Alistair Drakken! Alistair was a member of Team Diamond, a group of treasure hunters working for the Hidden and Unified Nations in Treasure-hunting, also known as H.U.N.T. and he was out on patrol, looking to see what treasures he could find. What he had just found though was the embodiment of serendipity. He watched Rouge the Bat flying off through the sky and he laughed ominously to himself as he watched her go.

"Oooh…how serendipitous…" he purred to himself in his deep, growling voice that was only done this way because of his mask "The traitor has shown her disgusting face once again. Now we can settle an old vendetta…"

With that said, Alistair flapped his mighty wings and he swooped off after Rouge, flying as silently as he could and keeping his distance so that Rouge wouldn't hear him. As he flew after Rouge, he pressed a button on the side of his head and activated a comlink he had built into his mask.

"Lennox, after a year of searching, I have managed to locate the traitor to H.U.N.T. at last." said Alistair "The one we all know as… Rouge the Bat."

"Slay her." came the dark, cold voice of Lennox Meers the Meerkat, the cold, cruel leader of Team Diamond "Make sure that she never lives to fly another mile."

"By your will Lennox." cackled Alistair darkly, clearly delighted at the thought of tearing Rouge apart.

With that said, Alistair flapped his wings the hardest he could possibly flap them, pushing himself forward and increasing his cruising speed by the minute. It was almost like swimming only with no water, Alistair's wings propelled him forward as he flapped them and he picked up speed. Alistair was one of the fastest fliers on Mobius, out-matching even Tails in flying skills and speed. He'd catch up to Rouge in no time. Unfortunately, the price you pay for flying faster in order to catch up to the person you're following is that you make some noise. A lot of noise for that matter. Flying silently while also trying to keep up with someone you're following is not an easy task to do and even an aerial ace like Alistair is incapable of doing such a thing. So as Alistair flew closer to Rouge, Rouge began to hear his wings flapping directly behind her. This caused the bat to turn around and promptly kick the thing she was hearing behind her across the face. That kick sent Alistair spiralling out of control and he hurled through the sky, clutching his face in pain. Rouge flew down towards Alistair for she couldn't quite clearly see who he was and she grabbed him. The look on her face after that was nothing short of horror and amazement once she could clearly see who it was she was dealing with. Her ears stood up straight than usual and her mouth dropped open. It was often difficult to surprise Rouge like this but in this particular case, Rouge couldn't help but be surprised. For she knew who Alistair was and she was not happy to see him again.

"You?!" she gasped "Alistair Drakken?! Oh no, not you! Not you!"

"Yes Rouge, it is me indeed." sneered Alistair, slugging Rouge in the belly and making her let go of him.

Rouge doubled over and Alistair flew back from her as she rubbed her belly better. In order to stay airborne, Alistair flapped his wings as furiously as possible. Rouge looked back at Alistair, the pain in her gut now gone so she didn't have to bend over anymore.

"Well, well, well…I didn't think I'd see your ugly mug again after two years." muttered Rouge "So what are YOU doing here than freak-zilla?"

"I could ask you the same traitor!" growled Alistair "But being as you have minutes before I rip you apart, I'll tell you anyway. I am here on a mission assigned to me by Lennox Meers. A mission to locate the long lost Key of Opulence, a treasure we have been searching for since Team Diamond was first formed and seeing as you're here, I guess I have to eliminate the competition! That and I've been given orders to kill you for your treachery after I informed Lennox on your presence."

"Well, Lennox sure knows how to treat a lady." muttered Rouge "Well I've got news for you buster, I'm looking for that key as well and **I'M** gonna find it first! If you're here to kill me then I guess I'm gonna have to kick your sorry butt first."

"I'd like to see you try Rouge the Traitor!" snarled Alistair.

With that said, the ferocious bat soared towards Rouge and scratched her directly across the chest with his claws. Rouge cried out in pain as three fresh cuts spread across her chest and started stinging thanks to the biting wind up in the clouds where they were now. Alistair then proceeded to lunge at Rouge and start viciously slashing and clawing at her as savagely as possible. Rouge blocked most of his blows with her arms and hands but Alistair still managed to get some heavy hits in there and managed to catch her with his claws in a few places. Rouge raised up her legs and kicked Alistair as hard as she could away from her. Alistair hurled backwards through the sky but he regained himself and flew back towards Rouge with his claws bared. Rouge flew out of his way, leaving him to dive through a cloud and she screw-kicked him in the back. Alistair yelped in pain as he was hit rather heavily in the back by that screw-kick. Alistair swung around and clawed at Rouge only to find out she had flown back and out of the way. Alistair looked all around

the cloudy scenery for Rouge but he couldn't see her anywhere. Alistair however had something that could aid him in this imperative situation. He poked something on the side of his mask with a sharp clawed finger. The thing on his mask he was poking was a button that was a couple of centimetres deep into the mask and the hole it was in was only big enough for a claw-tip to stick in so only Alistair could press this button.

"You cannot mask yourself in the obscuring mist of the clouds around us traitor!" snarled Alistair "For my mask has a heat-vision feature built into it! You can fly but you can't hide out here Rouge!"

As Alistair just said to us, his mask had a heat-vision feature and he'd just activated it, meaning that Rouge wouldn't be able to hide in the clouds from Alistair. His heat-vision feature would just pick up her heat signature and he'd spot her in no time. Alistair looked all around in the clouds for Rouge, totally unaware that Rouge was actually flying a fair distance behind him and watching him search for her. Rouge seized her chance and she swooped towards Alistair at top speed. Alistair heard her coming and turned around sharply, only to get Rouge's foot directly into the middle of his face. That attack left a small chip in Alistair's visor and he was sent catapulting backwards by that kick. Alistair recovered from the blow only for Rouge to screw-kick him in the gut and push him down towards the ground. Alistair however grabbed her legs and stopped her dead in her tracks. He swung her around and threw her down onto the ground down below. Rouge crashed down pretty heavily on the ground and she lay there, grimacing in pain and wondering which part of her to rub better. She pushed herself weakly up into a sitting position and tried to fight the pain that flared in her bones. Alistair cackled at Rouge and he swooped down towards the jewel-thieving bat with his claws bared. Rouge saw him coming and weakly rolled out of the way, leaving Alistair to land on the ground beside her. Unfortunately, Rouge wasn't quick enough to get up and launch an attack. Alistair backhanded her across the back of her head as she pushed herself up onto her feet, knocking her back down onto her side. Alistair saw his chance and he placed his claws around Rouge's neck. He curled them around her neck ever so slowly and gently and then he squeezed on her neck as hard as he could, throttling her badly. Rouge gagged and choked, gasping for breath

as Alistair throttled the poor bat. Alistair cackled menacingly as he prepared to finish off Rouge. But just as Rouge was beginning to lose air, she stomped on his foot and made Alistair wail in pain. While he didn't let go of Rouge and fought the pain in his foot, he did loosen his grip a little in pain after the stomp so Rouge was able to wrestle herself out of his grasp and punch him in the face. The punch left her with a slightly sore fist though for Alistair's mask was very tough but she managed to ignore it long enough to throw an uppercut at the bat. Alistair punched Rouge in the chest, making sure he hit her in the cuts he'd left on it to make the punch hurt more. Rouge winced ever so tensely and she clutched her stinging chest in pain. Alistair then added insult to injury by kicking her in the face. Rouge stumbled backwards but she still remained standing. Alistair pounced on Rouge only for her to raise her hands and block the blow. She pushed Alistair down onto the ground and stomped on his stomach as hard as she possibly could. Alistair picked himself up and he reached into a small pouch he had in his wing. He took something out of it just as Rouge lunged at him. She tackled Alistair down onto the ground and with a little sleight-of-hand, Alistair managed to sneak the thing he'd taken out of his wing pouch on a strand of Rouge's hair, the one place she wouldn't feel the thing he'd put on her. It was (of course) a tracking device. Alistair was inserting it onto her as a little contingency plan for in case Rouge beat him and got away. He'd be able to find her in no time and, if she found the Key of Opulence first, she'd lead him and his team right to it. Rouge didn't feel Alistair put the tracker on her so she was completely unaware of what Alistair had just inserted on her. She punched Alistair hard in the face but Alistair pushed Rouge off of himself and got back onto his feet.

"Nice to see that your battle prowess hasn't faltered at all traitor." purred Alistair sinisterly "I hate it when my kill is too easy. Takes the fun out of slaying I say."

"Oh really?" snorted Rouge "So what do you think when a kill is too hard? Do you hate that as well?"

With that said, Rouge jumped into the air and screw-kicked Alistair again. The attack knocked the mask-wearing bat off of his feet and sent him sprawling across the ground. Alistair picked himself up just

in time to block another kick from Rouge with his arm. Rouge kicked at Alistair again but Alistair caught her by the ankle and he threw her leg upwards, making her fall over onto her back ever so sharply. Rouge winced and fought the pain flaring up in her back as she hit the ground. Alistair advanced on Rouge and prepared to grab her but Rouge kicked him in the gut and made him double over in pain. Rouge picked herself up and she slugged Alistair as hard as she could, making him wheeze ever so loudly. Alistair clasped both his fists together and he slammed them on Rouge's head. Rouge was left feeling a little dazed after the attack but she managed to shake off the attack soon after. Not in time to block an uppercut to the face from Alistair though. The powerful uppercut threw Rouge backwards and she landed down on the ground back first again. Alistair then grabbed Rouge by the ankles and started to spin her around and around in a big circle. He spun her around a good few times before finally letting her go and sending her hurling across the battlefield like fired missile. Rouge came down with a heavy thud on the ground and skidded to a painful halt on her side. Rouge clutched herself in pain, feeling like her arm had almost come off due to how much that scrape across the ground hurt. Alistair flapped his wings and flew towards Rouge, ready to grab her and finish her off. But Rouge wasn't down yet. She jumped up to her feet and screw-kicked him directly in the face. That attack dented Alistair's mask and dislodged a small piece on it. The piece dangled underneath his mask like a strand of spider web hanging from the ceiling. Unfortunately for Alistair, that piece was important to his mask's function. VERY important to his mask's function. Alistair suddenly began gasping for breath and he started to cough and splutter ever so hoarsely. It was almost as if the air was being sucked out of his lungs.

"Hurk…wheeze…you fool…gasp…you've dislodged…one of my… cough, cough…air pipes!" wheezed Alistair hoarsely "I…won't… wheeze…live long…without it!"

"Oh poor you, if it was my problem then I'd be concerned about it." said Rouge coldly "You and your stupid team mates are dead to me Alistair and I have no concern for your wellbeing. You tried to kill me so you can suffer the consequences for it. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a treasure to find."

With that said, Rouge turned her back on Alistair quite rudely and she promptly flew off, leaving poor Alistair behind to suffocate thanks to a dislodged air pipe under his life-supporting mask. Unfortunately for Rouge, Alistair wasn't beaten that easily. The moment Rouge took flight and headed off the Tropical Jungle, Alistair reached into pouch in his other wing and got out some bolts and a wrench. Gasping for breath and his hands wobbling, he grabbed the dislodged pipe, put a bolt around it and inserted it into the section it had been in before being dislodged. He then lifted the wrench up to the pipe and tightened the bolt around it. The pipe was now properly re-attached and Alistair could breathe once again. Alistair breathed quickly in order to get the air back into his lungs and he put his tools back into the wing pouch. The crippled bat soon got his breathing back under control and he sighed with relief.

"That was a close call." he muttered to himself "Curse this infernal mask! I'm so dependent on it for living that it's going to be the death of me some day soon! Oh well, I've survived and I've managed to sneak that tracker on Rouge's hair…"

He reached into the pouch on his wing he'd taken the tracker out of and pulled out a little device with a screen on it. That screen traced where the tracker was heading. Alistair would now know where Rouge is going, no matter where she flies. Alistair cackled to himself and he pressed the comlink button in his mask.

"Lennox? This is Alistair. I regret to inform you that the little sneak got away from me. But I managed to sneak a tracking device on her." informed Alistair "She won't get away for long."

"Good." said Lennox "Would you require back-up Alistair?"

"Indeed so Lennox, Rouge is as tough as ever and she nearly got me killed by dislodging a piece on my mask." explained Alistair "I would very much like it if you, Owen and Roxy joined me in bringing her down."

"Very well, we shall converge to your location immediately." said Lennox "So what's Rouge up to then?"

"You will not believe this Lennox but…she's looking for the Key of

Opulence too." informed Alistair.

"Is she?!" snarled Lennox. He quickly clamed himself down though and continued "Well in that case, since she has a tracker on her, she might well lead us right to that key. Especially as I have a feeling she knows where it is…"

"Yes…" purred Alistair sinisterly, switching off his comlink.

All he had to do now was wait for his team-mates to arrive and then they could follow Rouge to where she was going. Once they caught up with her, she would be dead in a matter of seconds and they'd take the key from her lifeless corpse…

Meanwhile, Rouge had finally arrived at the Tropical Jungle. It had taken her a couple of hours flying with breaks in between to get there but the bat had finally arrived at the Tropical Jungle and was ready to find that glorious key she'd been hunting all her life. As she touched down, she reached into her glove and pulled out what appeared to be a little scroll of paper. When you have gloves as long as Rouge's, that is up to the elbow, you can store small things like that them for safe keeping. She then proceeded to unravel the scroll, which was pretty long and had been rolled up really small and folded over a couple of times to make it fit into her glove easily, and she looked at it. The scroll she had was a map she had found while hunting for clues on the Key of Opulence's whereabouts. The map wasn't entirely clear though and the location of the key was estimated at most but Rouge was willing to follow it as it was the biggest clue she had gotten on finding the Key of Opulence. Rouge studied the map, which detailed most of the Tropical Jungle's surroundings and nearby caves, and worked out which way to go.

"Right, if this little ol' map here's correct, my little treasure should be located about 100 paces from where I'm currently standing now and be in a cave that has a keyhole shape above the entrance." murmured Rouge as she studied the map "Gee, a cave with a keyhole shape above the entrance? The guys who sealed the key away sure know about subtlety don't they?" she sighed sarcastically "They may as well have just put a big neon-lit sign saying "The key's

in here dumbass!" Ha, ha, ha, ha…"

She chuckled to herself as she rolled and folded the map back up and put it back into her glove as neatly as possible.

"I can't afford to waste time here, if Alistair managed to conveniently come across me than there's no doubt in my mind that his buddies Lennox Meers and Owen Pounder won't be far behind. I may have lost them now but Team Diamond are great trackers. They might catch up to me somehow." Rouge murmured to herself "So I'd best make this stay as short as possible. Just go to the cave, get that key and fly the coop as quickly as possible. I can almost feel that glorious key in my hands right now. And the best part is, I worked out its location far and square and thus it is mine fair and square. I maybe a bad girl sometimes but it's not so bad playing it nicely for once." she said, beaming modestly to herself.

So without further ado, Rouge took flight and flew off in the directions she'd deduced from the map. She had the map memorized in her head after giving it a very good scan in that moment of rest she'd just had to look at it so the bat knew where she was going. Rouge flew on through the sticky, muggy jungle and followed the patch she was heading down, avoiding the low-hanging growth that surrounded her and drooped down in front of her. After about ten minutes of flying, Rouge arrived at her destination. There were four caves all spread out in various places across the huge rocky cliffs that loomed above the Tropical Jungle like giants looming above the terrified villagers they came across as they strolled through the pitiful human homes in search of food. The cave Rouge was looking for was a cave that had a keyhole shape carved above the entrance. The reason for this is because the people who originally owned the key often kept forgetting which cave they had hidden it in and so they had carved a keyhole shape above the entrance to the cave in which they had hidden it in so they wouldn't forget where they had hidden it (it won't matter now since they're dead). Rouge looked at the four cave entrances and found the one she was looking for. The second cave from the left had the keyhole shape carved above the entrance.

"Bingo." said Rouge happily "Now to find that key. Good thing I don't need a light or anything to help me see my way through the cave for

we bats can see in the dark. All it is for me now is a casual stroll into the cave and then I've found my Key of Opulence, the greatest treasure one could hope to possess."

Rouge smirked conceitedly to herself and she smugly strolled into the cave as if she was showing off to somebody only there was just her around. Rouge soon disappeared into the darkness of the cave as she ventured inside without a second thought. Not always the wisest thing to do when hunting down lost treasures for there could be booby-traps waiting to go off inside. At the moment though, everything seemed perfectly normal and Rouge didn't have anything to worry about. Or didn't she? For as Rouge wandered off into the cave, a hover-saucer came onto the scene and stopped outside of the cave with four occupants in it. And those four occupants were people that Rouge could honestly do without seeing right about now as she ventured into the cave to obtain the treasure she had dedicated her life to finding. These four were Team Diamond, all four members now together and ready to kill and get some treasures. After Alistair had called for help, Lennox had gathered up his team mates and they had brought a super-speedy hover-saucer so they could arrive at Alistair's position quickly and catch up with Rouge. Lennox was piloting the hover-saucer and his comrades, Alistair, Owen and Roxy, sat in the back and they all looked at the cave Rouge had gone into. Alistair peered at the device displaying where the tracker was going. It seemed to imply that Rouge had gone into the cave they were looking at right now.

"The tracker says she's in here." growled the voice of Alistair Drakken "She's probably in there looking for our treasure right now."

"In that case, we will allow her to obtain the relic and bring it out for us." purred Lennox, loading his twin revolvers with golden bullets "No way in hell I'm allowing that key to fall into the traitor's hands."

He, Roxy, Alistair and Owen all got out of the saucer and waited for Rouge to come out of the cave with their prize in hand. Once she stepped out of the cave, that Key of Opulence was coming home with them…

Deep down in the dark cave, Rouge carefully trekked through the rocky tunnels that stretched deep down into the earth and the bumpy, uneven ground she had to walk on. Rouge took her steps carefully so as not to trip over or misstep and stumble over. She could really do without twisting her ankles or anything. The cave ceiling was too low and too narrow for her to do any flying so for this one she had to walk. The ceiling was so low that Rouge's head nearly touched it and she had to crouch down a bit so she didn't bump it or anything. After all, bumping your head in a cave is the last thing you want to do given how much it hurts. As Rouge trekked slowly through the cave, she kept her gaze fixed straight ahead of her and eyed the way she was heading.

"Ugh…stupid low ceilings and bumpy floors!" groaned Rouge "It's hard for me to move around here. But I can't give up now, I'm so close to obtaining that key that I can practically feel it right now."

She stepped over a rather sizable rock on the ground and tip-toed her away around some rather awkwardly positioned rocks that were a little damp and slippery. She had her hands pressed firmly against the wall in order to keep her balance as she stepped over the slippery rocks. Beads of sweat began to trail down her head like snails slithering across a plant pot as she steadily made her way through the narrow tunnel she was going down.

"It would be so much more convenient if this tunnel was as wide as the entrance was." complained Rouge "But, of course, we can't have obtaining a treasure being too easy. I wonder how many people slipped and broke a limb or two down here?"

She soon wished she hadn't said those words for when you're trekking down a cave tunnel with a rocky, bumpy ground and low-ceiling, you do not want to think about slipping and injuring yourself, especially as you're trying to AVOID doing things like that in the first place. Rouge quickly focused back on her footing and carefully stepped over a loose stone that would have moved with so much as the tiniest push of the toe it was that loose. Rouge did not want to be stepping on stones like that as that could be painful for her if she fell over. Rouge wiped her forehead and continued to creep through the tunnel. After a while, she reached the end of it and crouched down low as she passed the tunnel exit and found herself in a huge wide-

open area of space with a high ceiling and loads of sharp rocks jutting from it like a mouth full of sharp teeth, all dripping with water. The drips plinked down on the ground every few minutes and over time, small puddles had been made because of the non-stop dripping. Rouge stood up straight and she rubbed her aching back which had been caused by being crouched down for so long.

"Aaaah, that's better." she said, stretching a little with relief "Now, where's that key…?"

She looked around and observed the room she was in now. She was amazed with how much space there was in comparison to that tunnel she had just slowly walked through and the floor was much more even and smooth now. She saw that at the end of the room was a stone pillar that stood up vertically and the pillar had something sitting on top of it. The thing sitting on the pillar was a rusty old box that would have had quite an opulent appearance and sparkle to it a few hundred years ago but it had now lost its colour and shine thanks to age and being down in a cave for so long. Rouge flew over to the pillar eagerly and she yanked the lid off the box. And in that rusty old box was…the Key of Opulence! It was a huge, golden key with a radiant gleam to it. It had four rubies and four sapphires on it and they all sparkled like nothing Rouge had ever seen before. The key was about as long as Rouge's lower arm and the size was on par with a large dagger. Rouge put her hands to her mouth in awe and she gaped from behind her hands at what she was seeing.

"Ah…this is it!" she squeaked happily "I've…I've found it at last I've found the greatest treasure ever to be hidden away! I've found the Key of Opulence at long last!"

She eagerly grabbed the key and held it up to her face where she rubbed her cheek against it.

"Oooh, you're so gorgeous you are. You're my little pretty you are and I think I'll keep you all to myself." cooed Rouge delightedly "I've got a spot prepared for you in my collection of jewels too. You'll love being in my collection you will my beautiful little key."

The key obviously said nothing back to her for it was just an

inanimate object. Rouge giggled to herself for talking to a jewelled key and she sighed to herself.

"Oh daddy…if only you could see me now." she said sadly "I promised you I'd find that key and Now I've got it. If only you could see me now daddy…"

Ten years ago…

The day was going as normal for the young Rouge the Bat. She'd had a pretty lovely day at school and was skipping merrily on her way home from school. She pranced about like a playful little lamb through the streets of Central City and headed off to Roger's Jewel Shop, her home place. But unfortunately, Rouge was not going to come home to a pleasant sight. Rouge skipped around a corner, singing to herself like any adorable young girl often does and she headed down the straight road that led to the jewel shop. As she headed there though, she soon realized that something was terribly wrong. Rouge stopped skipping and observed the scenery ahead of her. The awnings above the shop had fallen down and were lying on the pavement outside the shop, slithers of broken glass littered the road like scattered breadcrumbs for hungry birds in the streets and the door had come off its hinges. Somebody had clearly broken into the shop and done a lot of damage. Rouge's heart stopped as she saw all this.

"Oh no…!" she gasped, her feet frozen to the ground in horror "Oh no, no, no, no, no! Daddy! Has someone hurt him?!"

Rouge took off like a lightening bolt and ran straight into the shop, avoiding the broken glass and stepping over the fallen awnings as she ran inside. She found even greater horrors inside for she suddenly found out that the shop had been burgled! There was not a jewel left in sight. Not a single jewel was left on the shelves, not even a little ring. Everything was gone and the shelves were bare. Rouge gasped in disbelief and horror and almost fell over in fright.

"Oh my gosh! We've been robbed!" shrieked Rouge "Daddy! We've been robbed! We should call the cops!"

She received no answer though. Rouge's stomach began to tingle with worry. Where was her dad? She stumbled around the room in worry and looked for Roger. She found him sooner than she thought though but unfortunately, he was not going to be greeting her. Rouge had brushed against something with her foot while looking for Roger and she looked down only to see it was her dad…and not in the best of condition either. He was lying dead on the floor, blood pouring from a gunshot wound he had in his chest and his body was laden with bruises and cuts. Roger had clearly been brutally attacked and murdered by whoever broke into the shop and raided everything. Rouge gasped in incredulous horror and she knelt by her dad's body.

"Daddy?" she whispered nervously "Daddy? Are you OK? Daddy?!" she spoke a little louder, shaking his body.

No answer came from the lips of her father for he was dead. Rouge couldn't contain herself any longer, she broke down into rainfalls of tears and she put her head onto her father's stomach, staining his blood-soaked shirt with her tears.

"NNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" she wailed, her sobs loud enough to be heard all over the neighbourhood and saddening enough to make even a deadpan person break down.

Rouge wailed and cried for quite a while after this horrific discovery but nobody was around to hear her cry and scream in anguish for nobody else was around to hear her. All Rouge could do now was grieve over her deceased father and wish that he would just miraculously come back alive. But alas, this couldn't be. Roger was dead and that was all there was to it. After a couple of minutes, Rouge wiped her tears away and started whimpering to her dead father.

"Daddy…sniff…I'm so sorry I wasn't here to help you!" wailed Rouge "Sob…But I'm gonna make a promise to you…whimper…I'm gonna become a treasure hunter like you once were…I'm gonna hunt down the most glorious treasures ever and replace all that we lost. And… I'm gonna find that golden key thingy. That "Key of Opulence" we read about. I'm gonna do it all…for you daddy. I promise that I'll find

that key and make you proud…I promise…"

And with that she broke down again, wailing a little quieter than earlier but still really sadly. This day had turned into a nightmare for Rouge but the promise she'd made to Roger over his dead body was going to become her legacy and make her the woman she is now…

Present Day…

Rouge snapped out of her little memory and wiped a few tears away.

"I miss you so much daddy." she said to herself "I wish you were here to see me deliver this marvellous key back home. As is…you're watching me from the heavens above. Oh well, I know that you'd be very proud of me if you were here now."

She smiled to herself, content with that very thought she'd given herself.

"Now then my beautiful key, let's get you home and make you into a fine display piece for myself." purred Rouge "You're going to look gorgeous alongside my other gems you are…"

But unfortunately, her leave was not going to be so simple for the cave ceiling was so old and frail from the state of decay it had endured over the years and it began to crumble! Chunks of stone began to shower down from the ceiling and Rouge leaped back in shock, clutching the key to her chest.

"Oh no, please don't cave in on me!" wailed Rouge "Anything but that right now!"

It seemed that the ceiling was willing to ignore her though for it continued to crumble and cave in on the ground below. Chunks of rock began to rain down from the ceiling and crash down all around Rouge, frightening the bat half to death and making her run for it with the key in hands. To make matters worse, the crumbling rocks got bigger and bigger as they fell to the ground and broke into

pieces as they crashed down. Rouge weaved her way around the falling rocks and dodged every single one that fell to the ground. But the worst was yet to come for the huge pointy rocks were now beginning to fall down towards her! A huge pointed rock broke away from where it was hanging and it fell down to the ground just in front of Rouge, making her jump back in alarm. Then another pointed rock fell down to the ground and blocked the exit by falling down on its side in front of it! Rouge was horrified to see this. She was trapped in a cave with a crumbling ceiling! She was going to be squashed and crushed to a mushy paste if she didn't get out of here and fast! Rouge jumped into the air and screw-kicked the rock that was blocking the entrance. That first kick left some damage on it but not quite enough. So Rouge flew into the air and screw-kicked it again desperately. That kick managed to break through the rock and re-open the exit for her. Now Rouge was through, she frantically darted up the narrow tunnel as fast as she could, not taking care to watch the slippery stones as she ran and she ended up slipping a couple of times, banging her knees more times then she would have liked as she ran up the tunnel. But despite all that, Rouge finally managed to get out of the tunnel and darted up through the rest of the cave and out of the cave entrance. She was back outside in the warm, muggy sunlight of the Tropical Jungle and the fresh, tropical scent that lurked around the jungle tickled her nose as she breathed in the fresh air happily. She threw herself onto the ground in exhaustion and put her hand over her pounding heart, feeling it calm down a little after all that tenseness and excitement.

"Oh phew…I made it…" she puffed "I made it…oh joyous day. Now I can get this beautiful baby home and…"

She got up onto her knees only to see that she wasn't alone out here. Her ears drooped back in horror as she found out that she was face-to-face with none other than Team Diamond! Lennox, Owen and Alistair were all there with serious looks on their faces and Lennox already had his revolvers in hands! She noticed they had a new face among the team but she didn't think that the new girl was going to be any friendlier than Lennox, Owen and Alistair are. Heck, she looked just as mean with that horrible baton she had in her hands. Roxy glowered at Rouge and patted her hand with the bat.

"Oh no…!" gasped Rouge, her heart seizing up in shock.

"Hello Rouge the Traitor!" snarled Lennox "So nice of you to save us the job of finding the Key of Opulence! Now we can take what is ours and deliver you your long over-due penance for your treachery two years ago…!"

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 126-136**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 100-115**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 120-125**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 116-119**

******* See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 76**

Oh no! Rouge has been found and is cornered by the nefarious Team Diamond! Will they kill her and get the treasure or is Rouge seriously going to get past those four treasure-hunting demons? Find out next time in Part 2 where the fun REALLY starts and more of Rouge's origin story is revealed...

I've re-uploaded this chapter due to a small mistake I made. The flashback scenes were supposed to say TEN years ago, not EIGHT! Sorry for anyone who noticed that error...

Treasure-Hunting Rivals 2

Arc 18: Treasure Hunting Rivals

Takes between Stories 136 & 137 in Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius

Part 2

Today was going up and down for the notorious Rouge the Bat, renowned jewel thief and occasional spy and helper in the Royal Fighter's battles for freedom. After helping to foil the recent alien invasions Mobius had experienced, Rouge had finally gotten a moment to look for a treasure she had been looking for since childhood, the Key of Opulence. She'd finally managed to work out where it was and had flown to the Tropical Jungle to find it but then she'd gotten side-tracked by Alistair Drakken, a member of Team Diamond which in turn was a team working for the organization known as H.U.N.T. (**H** idden and **U** nified **N** ations in **T** reasure-hunting). The two had ended up having a big fight which ended with Rouge getting away and leaving Alistair close to death until he fixed his mask and saved himself and then Rouge had finally found the Key of Opulence but almost got caved in by the crumbling ceiling and had just managed to make it out of the cave alive. And right now, she had run into the path of Team Diamond themselves! All four of them were here! Lennox Meers the Meerkat, Roxy the Raccoon, Owen Pounder the Rabbit and Alistair Drakken the Bat. Rouge knew them all except Roxy and she was very, very frightened right now. Her ears drooped back in horror and her body began to shake most terribly at the sight of them.

"Oh no…oh no, no, no, no! Oh no, please, anyone but you guys!" gasped Rouge, crawling back a little in terror.

"Yes Rouge, it is us, Team Diamond that stand before your terrified eyes." sneered Lennox, twirling his revolvers around in proper cowboy fashion "Now say your prayers as I execute the traitor to Team Diamond once and for all!"

"So handsome, that's Rouge the Bat is it?" purred Roxy, her hand on Lennox's shoulder "I've gotta say, she doesn't look like much. Is she really worth all the fuss?"

"She is indeed Roxy." said Lennox coldly "Rouge may not look like much but her appearance is deceiving. She's a pretty capable fighter and is good at eavesdropping on conversations thanks to her large ears. She's also a renowned swindler and cheat at times too and often managed to get us some great treasures with her skills. Very admirable traits for H.U.N.T. indeed." he added in a tone of voice that suggested he used to admire Rouge but now no longer feels the same way about her.

"Well Lennox, I'm so glad you remember me so well." purred Rouge sarcastically "Nice to know you have enough room in that brain of yours to remember a lady such as myself."

"SILENCE!" snarled Lennox, itching to pull the triggers on the revolvers "How can we possibly forget you after what you've done to us?!"

"Geez, two years pass and you'd think you'd have gotten over it." sighed Rouge in annoyance "I mean, you already have a new female member on your team, that must be a sign you've gotten over my betrayal?"

"I've never gotten over it!" snapped Lennox "Ever since you evaded us, I've been itching to track you down and exterminate you! You know the rules of H.U.N.T.! If you leave us then you get your memory wiped so you can't tell anybody about us and if you betray us, then you die simple as!"

"Did you ever think for a minute I'd willingly let you kill me just because I betrayed you?" snorted Rouge "No, I've got a life to live and I'm not letting you take it from me."

"Well guess what batty-girl, your life ends now!" growled Owen, bashing his fists together "You've got nowhere to run now and you're at our mercy! You're so dead now!"

"It isn't over until the fat lady sings as they say." sneered Rouge "If

you want me dead, then you'll have to catch me first." she added, getting into a fighting stance and getting ready to leap into action.

"Gladly!" said Owen gleefully, flexing his muscles "Prepare to be slaughtered bat-fink!"

"WAIT!" screeched Roxy, stopping Owen dead in his tracks and making everybody stop and shut up for a minute "Before we kill the traitor to H.U.N.T., would anyone care to tell me how Rouge came to betray you three?! I wasn't a member at the time so I need some exposition on me please!"

"Fine." said Lennox in annoyance "I'm sure Rouge would be willing to tell you about the day she first joined us and then I will tell you about her treachery." he said, glaring at Rouge.

"I sure would." said Rouge "So honey, you're my replacement I guess?"

"Not exactly replacement since I never joined with the intention of replacing you." said Roxy "But in a way, I could be. The name's Roxy the Raccoon by the way and I have a feeling I'm not going to like you Rouge."

"Same here sunshine." said Rouge smugly "I wonder if you'll end up stabbing Lennox in the back like I did…ha, ha, ha. So why did you join H.U.N.T. then?"

"I tried to start a career in movies as an actress." explained Roxy "I made only one film and won an Acorn Award for my performance in the film but I ended up going crazy with my riches and was quickly reduced to rags after I failed to keep a steady budget and spent too much too fast. And thus was a poor woman for a while until I was given some info on H.U.N.T. So I joined this fine bunch of treasure hunters to get some dough in my pocket and now I'm rich beyond my wildest dreams." she added quite proudly as if she was quite pleased to be with H.U.N.T. although deep down, she secretly harboured regrets for joining them.

"Fallen film star eh?" mused Rouge "Eh, fair enough reason to become a treasure-hunter. I remember the reason I joined you guys.

Goodness me I do as if it was only yesterday…"

Two years ago…

It had been eight years since the death of Roger the Bat, Rouge's father and inspiration for her love of jewellery and Rouge had been pretty much a wanderer. She'd been flying around place to place and traversing like a homeless vagabond searching for a place to stay (she's not been homeless since her father died, she lived in the shop with other relatives until she decided it was time for her to start her treasure-hunting career). Rouge was now sixteen years old and had been training herself in combat for a good few years, honing her skills and shaping herself up into being the formidable fighter she is now. Now she was ready, Rouge had left her home (which had never managed to recuperate from the day her father died) and had begun her treasure-hunting career. She wasn't doing too terribly well though. She hadn't managed to find much valuable items and so far, only had a couple of rare coins that aren't used anymore in Mobius' currency nowadays. But Rouge knew that this was because she was new to the business and would likely get better as she went along. This was just a test run of what she was going to be able of doing later in life. However, it seemed that Rouge may just get a shot at the big business for a mysterious stranger in a long coat and fedora had given her a flier, giving her details about the organization known only as H.U.N.T. The flier had a location for a secret office and the organization's phone number. Rouge was quite intrigued by this since she wanted to become a treasure-hunter and becoming a member of an organization devoted to obtaining treasures sounded like her kind of gig. So Rouge followed the instructions on the flier and came to a brick wall at the back of an ally-way. This wall contained a secret office behind it and Rouge shifted the wall to one side. It opened up, revealing a corridor that led down to the office and Rouge stepped inside, the wall closing behind her. She wandered down the corridor and came to the door to which she politely knocked out.

"Come in" came a deep, cold voice from behind the door.

Rouge stepped inside and found herself walking into a pretty nice

looking office. It had a desk, lots of chairs and a couple of tables and a TV monitor that hung on the wall. There were three people sitting in the office. There was Lennox Meers the Meerkat, Owen Pounder the Rabbit and Alistair Drakken the Bat all sitting around the desk and adding up their profits for the day. This is what Team Diamond used to look like before they had Roxy the Racoon on the team, just the three boys on the team. Roxy wouldn't become a member of the team until a year later. Lennox looked up from his sums and his eyes nearly popped out of their sockets at the sight of Rouge standing before him. Owen and Alistair shared his surprise too for it had been a while since they had seen a woman ever since their treasure-hunting careers started, and one as sexy as Rouge too.

"Well…I think an angel has just descended into my office…" said Lennox slowly "I don't think I've seen a woman as beautiful as you for a long time."

"Aw stop it, you're too kind." chuckled Rouge "So, I was given this flier about you guys and the flier told me to come here. Is this the right place?" she asked, showing Lennox the flier she had been given by the stranger in the long coat.

Lennox took the flier from her and studied it for a minute.

*"Yes, you are indeed in the right place my dear." said Lennox, setting the flier down neatly on the desk "This is the office of Team Diamond, one of the many teams working for the secret organization known as H.U.N.T. We are the " **H** idden and **U** nified **N** ations in **T** reasure-hunting" and we are the most secretive organization in the world. Nobody in the world knows who we are and what we do and that is what we aim for in this business."*

"Wow." said Rouge "I think I'm gonna like you guys already. So, who are you guys then?"

"I'm the leader of Team Diamond and my name is Lennox Meers." introduced Lennox.

"I'm Owen. Owen Pounder." introduced Owen in his deep, masculine voice.

"And I am Alistair Drakken." rumbled Alistair in his trademark growling voice.

"Charmed I'm sure. I'm Rouge the Bat." said Rouge "I once lived in a jewellery shop with my dad, Roger the Bat but eight years ago, he was cruelly taken away from me by somebody or maybe even some people and my shop was robbed. Since then, I've promised him I would replace what had been stolen from us and I'd find the legendary "Key of Opulence"."

Lennox seemed quite surprised to hear Rouge say all that as if he wasn't expecting something like that to come out of her.

"Oh dear…I'm so sorry to hear that." he said, secretly not feeling sympathetic in the slightest (he doesn't even know HOW to feel sympathetic!) "Well, I must say you have valid reasons for wanting to join us Rouge. I think we'll be quite happy to let you in."

"Thanks." said Rouge "But before we get started, what's your stories all of you? Why are you treasure-hunters then?"

The three members of Team Diamond looked at each other. They were not expecting this at all. Nobody had ever asked them their reasoning behind their careers before. Well, no harm in telling so they decided to tell her.

"Well some of us are here because of one bad day that left us in poverty." explained Owen, going first "Most members of H.U.N.T. are people who became poor thanks to a series of unfortunate events. I'm one of those people. I used to be a heavy-weight wrestler a few years ago. I was top of my game and loved by all. But then, I participated in a tag-team tournament. My partner accidentally threw me into the ring post and I split my head open. I swear to god I thought my brain was going to seep out of the wound it was that bad and painful!"

"Eew!" said Rouge, cringing at the very image of someone's brain seeping out of a wound in the head.

"So after that accident, I was bed-bound for months." continued Owen "I came back after I had recuperated expecting a warm

welcome only to be told, very coldly might I add, that I was history and my reign had come to an end. There was a new wrestling hero in town and I was cruelly ousted by my former peers. Outraged, I snapped and went crazy on the newbie, nearly killing him but I was stunned and incarcerated by the cops. Lennox here kindly broke me out of prison though and he wanted to recruit me in this organization for he found my strength to be impressive and now here I am." he finished, puffing his chest out in a prideful manner.

"Fascinating." said Rouge "And sounds just about right for you."

Owen nodded.

"Speaking of me…" said Lennox "Here's my story: I used to be one wealthy kid in my youth. I lived a rather opulent life and had it quite easy. After I had graduated from college, I auditioned to become an entrepreneur. But unfortunately, my career didn't go so well. I sold a faulty product accidentally and the angry customer's complaints spread like wildfire, leaving nobody willing to trust me and the company I was working for giving me the sack. To make matters worse, after I was fired my parents both died of natural causes a few days after. I lost my mind with grief and for the first time in my life, I didn't know what to do. I was so used to having it easy that I had no idea how to deal with loss and grief. Because of my lack of focus on life, I ended up becoming dreadfully poor to the point I ended up on the streets. One rainy day though, I was given a flier about H.U.N.T. and, desperate for cash, I eagerly joined up and now, here I am. Lennox Meers, leader of one of H.U.N.T.'s most renowned and prodigious treasure-hunting teams ever."

"That's a pretty sad story Lennox." said Rouge, feeling sorry for the meerkat "I'm glad things are looking up for you though."

"Thank you my dear." said Lennox graciously "Now on to Alistair."

"My story is a little different from the others." growled Alistair "For I became a member of Team Diamond for more reasons than one. I used to be a member of a group of spy-bats that liked to eavesdrop on conversations and steal whatever we could. I was the prominent member of the group for I was the best at my game. Unfortunately, all of that came to an end when one dark night, I was hit and run

down by a truck. The resulting road accident left my face grotesquely deformed and myself in a most critical condition. I was clinging onto life like a rock climber clinging on the edge of a cliff for dear life and I was taken to medical care immediately. I was given this mask by the doctors. It is the only thing keeping me alive now. It is a life-support mask and it keeps me alive by feeding air into my lungs. I am also permanently on a liquid-diet since I cannot eat anymore. Unfortunately, the mask ended up getting me kicked out as the group hated freaks. I desired revenge on the group that dared to kick me out just because I need life-support and Lennox Meers happened to coincidentally be in the area when I was swearing revenge on them. He liked the sound of my desires and he offered me a place at the table. And thus, here I am, a member of Team Diamond and one of the deadliest treasure-hunters out there."

"Wow." said Rouge, clearly interested and fascinated by all of this "So what happened to your group? Did you get revenge on them?"

"Indeed I did." said Alistair, clearly pleased with himself "Me and Owen took care of them all. Owen in particular gave them a good beat-down."

"Well I'm not surprised considering he's a former wrestler so I can just imagine what he did to all those bats." said Rouge, shuddering a little "At least I'm a bat he won't be breaking though."

"Indeed not, I have no reason to harm you." said Owen "That and you're here to join us too."

"Yes." said Rouge "So, how long have you all been in this business then?"

"Nine years." replied Lennox "Owen's just the same only a couple of months less then me and Alistair's been with us for seven years. He joined us two years later."

"Wow, you've been treasure hunters for that long?" mused Rouge "You must REALLY like your jobs mustn't you?"

"We do indeed." said Lennox proudly "Now then, let's get down to business. You want to join us right? Well first off, how capable are

you in battle?"

"Very." said Rouge, tapping her legs "Nobody delivers a kick as punishing as mine. I'm also an ace flier too."

"Very well." said Lennox "We may put those skills to good use. Second of all, here are the rules of H.U.N.T.: First off, once you join us, you cannot leave. In here, you stay, you never go. Second off, if you dare betray us then you will be killed. Third off, if you REALLY want to leave us and no longer enjoy being with us, or if we simply tire of you and you're no long useful to us, then we will wipe your memory clean so you will not remember us and then we'll let you go. And fourth, we do not tolerate failure so make sure you do not fail us in these treasure-hunts."

"I've got it all." said Rouge "I think I'm gonna enjoy this organization. Consider me an honorary member of H.U.N.T. now."

"Marvellous." said Lennox brightly, holding his hand out "Welcome to the team Rouge the Bat."

And with that said, he and Rouge graciously shook hands and the deal was done. Rouge was now a member of Team Diamond and a career of treasure-hunts lay ahead of her. She was going to fulfil her promise she had made to her dad easily now she was with a group of treasure-hunters…

Present Day...

"…and that's how I came to be a member of H.U.N.T." said Rouge, her expression suggesting she didn't really look back on that time fondly "At first I thought I was going to enjoy working with Team Diamond but over time…I realized that I had made a big mistake."

"Why's that then?" asked Roxy, curious to hear the answer to her question.

"For starters, they go against my moral code of "Hunt treasures but never kill"." said Rouge, a look of disgust on her face "The amount of killing I endured during my time with Team Diamond was

sickening and after a few weeks of hell with them, I decided to go up to Lennox and call it quits because I was sick of seeing them kill so many innocent people just to get their treasures."

Roxy nodded, understanding Rouge's situation at the time since she herself finds H.U.N.T. to be needlessly ruthless and over-the-top violent in their operations and doesn't really relish the thought of killing just to get a quick buck, even if she is content hunting treasures. Lennox, Owen and Alistair however all glared at Rouge menacingly.

"We're so sorry we did not appeal to you." said Lennox sarcastically, his hands on his waist but still holding his revolvers and a hardcore scowl on his face "But we did make it clear that H.U.N.T. does whatever it can do to get what it wants, even if we have to kill in order to get it."

"Exactly!" retorted Rouge, baring her teeth and pointing an accusing finger at the cold-hearted meerkat "That's why I wanted to quit, I couldn't take your needlessly violent ways any longer and wanted to get out of the bloodshed! But before I could quit I eavesdropped on a conversation between you and Owen and found out that you and your cronies were the ones who killed my dad! And you can deny it all you want, I heard you clear as crystal when I spied on you! I remember the conversation as if I had just heard it seconds ago…"

Two years ago: Five weeks after Rogue joined H.U.N.T…

Rouge hadn't quite enjoyed her time with Team Diamond. True she enjoyed finding and collecting all the treasures she had found with them and was getting an equal share and putting her skills to good use, there was something she just didn't like about them. All the killing they did. Whenever Team Diamond robbed a shop, they killed the shop owner and made it look like he had done it himself and then robbed it, their excuse being so he can't call for help when the shop gets robbed. And whenever anyone tried to get in their way, they killed them. It was just simply too much for poor Rouge since she never believed killing was a necessity in anyway and that killing just to get a jewel was not the right way in her eyes. Rouge had

decided she had had enough bloodshed and murderous tendencies with Team Diamond so she was going to quit the team and leave them forever. As she strolled through the corridor, she began wondering on how to break the news to Lennox .

"OK…how do I put it to that sadist-in-meerkat's clothing?" wondered Rouge "Maybe I could say to him "Hey Lennox, I'm sorry to say that I do not enjoy these hunts with you and your cronies and I wanna just quit and forget you guys ever exist."? I could say that but then they're still free to kill innocents while robbing more treasures. Maybe I could escape before they wipe my memory clean of them and then squeal on them to the cops? Yeah, that would be a good idea but I doubt that the cops are willing to listen to me since I'm one of them, well am one of them until now that is. Well, I'll just see what happens when I…"

Her little conversation with herself was cut short when she walked by Lennox 's office and heard a conversation that was going on inside the office. Rouge's large ears pricked up and her nosy nature decided to kick in at this moment. Rouge knelt down by the door and pressed her ear against it, trying to listen to what was being said.

"Hmm…seems Lennox and his buddies are talking." mused Rouge "Let's see what my big ol' ears can make out from behind that door. I like to know what people are talking about after all, especially the conversation's about me."

So, being the nosy little thief she is, Rouge listened intently by the door and managed to overhear what was being said in the office. Lennox and Owen were the only ones in the office right about now. Alistair was out raiding jewellery shops since he felt like he wanted a solo mission for once and wasn't ready for a rest yet. Rouge listened as the meerkat and rabbit conversed to each other and what she was about to hear was something that would cross the line for her.

"Lennox, I don't like the fact that we have Rouge the Bat on our team!" complained Owen, bashing the desk angrily and cracking it a little "I don't like her one little bit! She's far too nosy for my liking and I always feel like she's waiting to stab us in the back or something! I know what women are like! If she's sassy, flirtatious and sly, she's likely to be a traitor at some point!"

"Owen, please, you're just going by gut instinct here." said Lennox casually, his face still straight as if nothing was happening right now "The child's just fine on our side. She's very efficient at her job and is doing marvellously for us. There's no reason to distrust her."

"Well I do distrust her!" snapped Owen "I've seen enough women of her kind to know that they love to betray the men they seduce! Not that I'm saying she's seduced any of us but you get the idea…"

"Owen, you can't play on stereotypes either!" growled Lennox, leaping up onto his feet and knocking his chair over onto its back "Don't judge Rouge by the way other women with personalities like hers act! She maybe different to those women!"

"Maybe so but I still have a bad feeling in my gut about her." muttered Owen, putting his hands behind his back and lowering his voice a little "Especially as she likes to eavesdrop on conversations. I mean, what if she ever finds out that it was us that killed her stupid father? That's what I'm worried about Lennox ?! She might find out that we were the ones who killed Roger the Bat eight years ago! And then what's she gonna do if she finds that out?! She'll betray us and sell us out to the cops! We're not safe with that little rat in our ranks! It's only a matter of time until she finds out the truth!"

"Keep your flippin' voice down you loud-mouthed idiot!" screamed Lennox "If you're so worried about the stupid child finding out we killed her father then STOP SHOUTING SO LOUDLY SO SHE CAN HEAR US!" he bellowed, nearly blowing the flesh off of Owen's face with his shouts. His bellowing was powerful enough to blow a house over.

"Yes Lennox. Sorry Lennox." said Owen as quietly as he could.

Rouge thought her heart was going to go ballistic and then explode on the spot. She was so shocked at what she had heard that she fell backwards onto her bottom and backed away from the door. She was having trouble breathing because she was so shocked at what she had just heard.

"They…they…they killed my dad?!" she shrieked "Oh…oh my gosh! This…this is…this is un…unbelievable! I'm working for the same

heartless demons that murdered my dad?! I'll bet they raided the shop too! Well that just takes the cookie for me! I'm definitely ditching these losers now I know they're the ones who killed my dad! I'm not working with someone who took my old man away from me! Before I go though, let's see if any jewels from the shop are lying in their vaults…"

With that said, Rouge ran off to find Team Diamond's vaults and see what she could find in there. She was going to see if any merchandise from the shop was in there and if there was, she was going to take it all back from them and make a start to replacing what was stolen from her and Roger, by retrieving what had been stolen in the first place…

"…and thus I did the one thing I have never regretted doing at all, betraying Team Diamond." finished Rouge, her hands on her hips and her face as stern as anything "I retrieved all the stolen jewels from my dad's shop and hid it in a place that even Team Diamond themselves will never guess in a million years. So I had every right to betray you brutes. You do the one thing I never do when hunting treasures; kill innocents and you were the ones who killed my dad. Why on Mobius would I want to work with the same guys who killed my dad?"

Roxy was pretty surprised to hear all this and she looked at Lennox in astonishment. It seemed that she was feeling sorry for Rouge and was beginning to wonder who's side she was really on in this argument.

"Lennox, you didn't really kill Rouge's father did you?" she asked in horror.

"So what if I did?!" snarled Lennox "The old man asked for it! He dared to stand up to me and try to get in our way as we raided that jewellery shop! He got what was coming to him! I gave him what he asked for!"

"My dad had every right to stop you from raiding his shop!" shouted Rouge "He did not deserve his horrible death at all! You guys are all

heartless scoundrels who should be locked up forever! Heck, if the cops had believed me when I squealed on you to them after I escaped your clutches, you WOULD be locked up already!"

That last phrase made Lennox's face go purple with rage and steam pour out of his ears like a boiling kettle.

"That's enough!" growled Lennox "Team Diamond, get the little wretch and kill her! Be sure not to damage the Key of Opulence while you're at it, we want that treasure!"

With that said, Owen, Alistair and Roxy all ran up towards Rouge and prepared to deck her one. Rouge flew out of the way and left them all crashing into each other and lying in a heap on the ground below. Rouge swooped over them and attempted to flee for her life but Lennox leaped up into the air and dropkicked her down onto the ground. Rouge grimaced in pain as she landed sharply on her shoulder and Lennox kicked her again, sending her hurling over a full 360 degrees and landing on her side again. She dropped the Key of Opulence after that kick and Lennox seized it. He stuffed it into his cloak pocket and smirked at Rouge.

"Well that was easy enough." he sneered "Now for your death Rouge."

He whipped out his revolvers and he pointed them both at Rouge, one at her head and one at her chest. Rouge was quick to react though. She jumped up onto her feet and socked Lennox directly in the face with her fist, causing him to drop his revolvers. She then reached into his cloak and tried to retrieve the key but Lennox pushed her away and roundhouse kicked her in the face. Rouge was thrown down onto the ground by that kick and Lennox stood on her back, pinning her down to the ground so she couldn't get away. Rouge however raised her foot up and sharply kicked Lennox in the bum with the heel of her boot. The heel of a high-heel boot is always going to hurt if it hits you in the bum and Lennox knew it as he was sharply kicked by the heel of Rouge's boot. Lennox winced as he was hit and Rouge managed to push him off of herself. Lennox picked himself up and punched at Rouge but the bat blocked his blow and gut-punched him as hard as she could. Then she roundhouse kicked Lennox in the side and knocked him down onto

the ground, his trademark wide-brimmed hat falling off of his head as he fell down. Rouge stepped on Lennox to keep him down on the ground and again, tried to retrieve the Key of Opulence but Roxy ran in and batted her away with her baton weapon. Rouge hurled backwards and landed on her bum a few feet away from Lennox. Roxy advanced on Rouge menacingly, her baton in hand.

"I may feel sorry for what happened to your dad Rouge and the fact my buddies were the ones who did him in but I'm still a member of H.U.N.T. and I can't let traitors like you run freely." said Roxy coldly, twirling the baton around "If you evaded your punishment then I must help my boys give it to you."

"Very well then Roxy, I'll fight you too even though I have no beef with you." murmured Rouge "I do say that you should quit the team like I did though, a girl like you shouldn't be hanging out with boys like them."

That set Roxy off instantly. While Roxy secretly wanted to help Rouge get away, she couldn't do such a thing otherwise she would be executed by her team mates and she really didn't want to die right now. She had a life to live and she wasn't going to throw it away anytime now. She had to keep up appearances or Lennox would start getting suspicious of her. Roxy swung the bat at Rouge but Rouge dodged the attack by jumping up into the air and she flapped her wings to remain airborne. She kicked Roxy directly in the face and knocked the voluptuous raccoon down onto her back. Rouge attempted to kick her again but Roxy batted her away and knocked her down onto the ground but Rouge landed on her feet so she was still ready to launch another attack. Roxy picked herself up and ran towards Rouge. Rouge grabbed her by the fur though and threw her face-first into a rock that was lying nearby. Roxy ended up lying in front of the rock looking very dazed and confused. The impact of the crash left her very shaken and her face very sore. Rouge smirked at the raccoon and took to the skies. But she was brought down as quickly as she had flown up for Alistair flew in behind her and tackled her down to the ground, cackling maniacally as he did so. Rouge landed heavily onto the ground and grimaced in pain as she landed. Alistair flew down towards her and attempted to grab her. But Rouge rolled onto her back and raised her legs up. As

Alistair homed in on his prey like a diving eagle, Rouge stretched her legs out and kicked Alistair squarely in the centre of his mask. The bat was thrown backwards by the attack and his visor was left a little cracked. Fortunately for him though, the crack wasn't a big crack and he could still see very clearly through it. Rouge jumped into the air and screw-kicked Alistair before he could do anything. Rouge smirked at Alistair but that smirk was quickly removed from her face as Owen sneaked up behind her and grasped her into a bone-crushing bear hug. He wrapped his arms tightly around Rouge and began to squeeze the life out of her like a boa constrictor coiling around its unfortunate prey. Rouge gasped and wheezed for breath as she was squeezed like a sponge in Owen's arms.

"Ack…let me go!" spluttered Rouge "I'm…not your…cuddly little… teddy bear Owen!"

"No chance traitor!" growled Owen "You double-cross us, you get the bear-hug! Simple as that!"

And thus, Owen squeezed ever tighter on Rouge, making the bat gasp frantically for breath. It was bad enough that Owen was a muscular brute but the fact he used to be a heavyweight wrestler made his bear-hug all the more deadly. Rouge squirmed frantically in Owen's grasp, desperate to get free. But trying to get out of Owen's bear-hugs was like trying to worm your way through a hole so small that even your head can't get through it. That is to say, impossible. But Rouge knew a way of getting out of Owen's grasp without needing to break free. She swung her head backwards and smacked him in the face. But Owen surprisingly managed to take the head-butt! The rabbit was renowned for his resilience after all. When you're a former wrestler, you're just naturally resilient to most blows. But Rouge knew one place that would hurt even Owen very badly. She aimed her foot and sharply kicked him in the groin. Owen's face twisted into a hilarious expression of pain and discomfort as he was kicked in the tender spot. He maybe resilient to most attacks, but not an attack in THAT particular area. Owen was forced to let go of Rouge and clutch his groin in pain. Now Rouge was free, she flew up into the air and screw-kicked him across the battlefield. This moment was bound to go down in history as one of Owen's most humiliating moments ever. Rouge couldn't

help but chuckle delightedly at the rabbit. Her victory was cut short however when Lennox stood behind her and fired at her with his revolver. Rouge heard the shot and tried to weave out of the way but it was already too late. The bullet skimmed her across the wing and the bat winced in pain. Lennox began firing at Rouge rapidly with his bullets but the bat managed to dodge them all by running around frantically. Her wing was hurting too much for her to fly right now so she couldn't fly and screw-kick him yet. Rouge then leaped up into the air and somersaulted towards Lennox, dodging the bullets as she did so. She landed in front of Lennox and walloped him in the face with a powerful backhand. She didn't give Lennox the time to retaliate though, she threw another punch at him and made him double-over in pain. Then she twirled around and kicked him down onto his side as she walloped him across the face with her foot. The meerkat was left lying on the ground, groaning in pain. Rouge stood over him and attempted to get back her Key of Opulence but Alistair flew in on the scene and snatched her up like a falcon catching a bunny rabbit. He grabbed Rouge with the claws on his feet and flew up into the air with his mighty wings. He carried Rouge a good distance up into the sky and threw her down towards the ground. Rouge hurled through the sky and zoomed down to the earth below like a falling aircraft. Rouge began flapping her wings desperately to save herself from becoming a nasty stain on the face of the earth. The wing that Lennox had shot began to flare up with pain as she flapped her wings. But Rouge wasn't going to let the pain stop her, she kept flapping her wings furiously, ignoring the pain in her shot wing. She managed to flap her wings long enough to slow her fall and she was now able to land gently on the ground below. Only… Roxy was waiting for her as she landed. She had positioned herself just right so that Rouge would land in front of her and as the bat landed, she walloped her with the baton as if she was in a game of baseball (I think she'd be quite good at it don't you). Rouge hurled forward after that attack and she ended up getting a face full of dirt as she landed. Rouge picked herself up and turned around to face Roxy, who was running towards her with the baton high above her head. Rouge jumped up into the air and kicked Roxy away from her. The raccoon was sent flying backwards by the kick and she landed rather painfully on her back. Roxy grimaced tensely as pain flowed through her back like a raging current.

"You're not bad Roxy but you're not good either." taunted Rouge "You're a pretty feeble replacement for me. I wonder if Lennox would rather have me back then stick around with you?"

Roxy just fumed in annoyance at the bat's remark. Owen charged towards Rouge from behind like a raging bull and he attempted to grab the bat but Rouge heard him coming (obviously) and flew out of the way, leaving Owen to nearly stumble and fall over. Rouge landed behind Owen and pile-dived him in the back, knocking him down onto his stomach and leaving him groaning in pain. He wasn't down for long though, he picked himself up and uppercut Rouge in the face. That uppercut sent Rouge hurling up into the air and she landed back down on the ground again about twenty-feet away from Owen. Rouge groaned ever so loudly in pain and she clutched her face in agony. Now she was down, Owen ran towards Rouge and began top pummel her as hard as he possibly could. He punched her several times over at the hardest he could throw his punches and he didn't hold back on poor Rouge either, he just let her have it as hard and as heavily as he could. Poor Rouge was now like a punching bag for Owen and he was not holding back at all. Lennox and Alistair watched Owen beat Rouge up in delight whereas Roxy just cringed at the sight of the poor woman getting beaten up so easily. Watching this kind of thing was just too much for her and too painful for her to watch so she looked away. After letting Rouge have it for a couple of minutes, Owen threw her against a rock and Rouge lay there, battered and bruised and very much on the verge of passing out. She was far too weak to move now and she couldn't stand back up. Rouge strained hard as she tried to get back up but she couldn't. She was too beaten to do so.

"Ugh…I feel like I was punched by a gorilla…" muttered Rouge "Owen…beat me good and hard…he did…"

As Rouge lay there, trying to get back up, Lennox strode up towards her with a triumphant smirk on his face. Alistair, Owen and Roxy followed him as he advanced on the beaten bat. Rouge could only helplessly stare back at Team Diamond with her back pressed firmly against the rock and shivering like crazy. Her heart began to pound like there was no tomorrow for her as her former comrades advanced on her, ready to kill her for betraying them in the past and

make off with the Key of Opulence without further problems. Lennox smiled evilly at Rouge and he whipped out his two revolvers. He pointed them at Rouge's chest and prepared to fire.

"How about that you little wretch? We win." sneered Lennox, his smile the embodiment of gloating "We've got the Key of Opulence and now we're going to kill you and put you out of the treasure-hunting business forever. Say goodbye you little creep. How ironic it is that you shall share the same fate as your father? A bullet to the chest" he added with a cruel tone of glee in his voice as he prepared to fire the revolvers.

"No…please…don't do it!" begged Rouge "I'll…I'll make it up to you I swear! Please don't shoot me!"

"I highly doubt that you mean what you say this time." snarled Lennox "Now be quiet and face your sentence like a REAL member of Team Diamond."

He put his fingers on the triggers to his revolvers and prepared to fire them. Rouge just closed her eyes in fright, sweat raining down her face and her heart thumping away like a beating drum as she was about to be coldly and cruelly executed much like her father was eight years ago. Lennox pulled the triggers to his revolvers and…they just clicked. Nothing happened. Rouge opened her eyes and looked at the revolvers in wonder. Lennox pulled the triggers again. Nothing happened again. Lennox looked at his revolvers, wondering what the heck was going on. He opened up the bullet cylinders only to see to his disappointment that they were empty. Lennox cursed his bad luck and put his revolvers back in the holsters on his belt.

"Damn it! Out of bullets!" he moaned "And I forgot to pack some spares with me too! No matter. Owen can just snap your neck in two Rouge. Owen, you do the honours since my revolvers are empty." he ordered.

"Yes sir." said Owen, eerily delighted to receive such an order.

Rouge REALLY began to shudder as Owen advanced towards her and grabbed her by the neck. He hoisted her up to his height and

squeezed on her neck ever so tightly. So tightly that Rouge thought he was going to make her head shoot off into the sky like a cork shooting out of the wine bottle. Owen flashed a sadistic grin at Rouge as he prepared to snap her in two like a twig. Rouge shuddered in Owen's grasp. Never before had a rabbit looked so scary to her before.

"I got to kill plenty of bats when I helped Alistair slaughter his jerky group and now it seems I get to kill another!" laughed Owen "You'll be more special though since you're a feisty little fighter and former member of our team."

He then placed his hand on Rouge's face and prepared to snap her neck in two, the terrified bat whimpering in fear as she was about to get killed by the muscular bunny rabbit. But the finishing blow never came for out of the blue, a silver spherical object landed on the ground and emitted a sickly green coloured mist that seeped out all over the place, shrouding Team Diamond in mist and making them cough furiously.

"Cough, cough…we're being ambushed!" shrieked Lennox, covering his mouth "It's a smoke bomb and the stuff in it must be poisonous! Let's flee for it before anymore of those bombs come flying our way and suffocate us all!"

The whole of Team Diamond agreed and they all scrambled frantically to the hover-saucer, covering their mouths and trying hard not to breathe in the smoke for it seemed to be poisonous. They couldn't hang around for long otherwise they'd be poisoned so their fleeing for their lives was perfectly understandable. Owen had thrown Rouge down in his desperation so the bat was left behind to be poisoned by the smoke. Team Diamond all got into the hover-saucer and Lennox started it quickly. The saucer shot off like a rocket and whizzed off into the jungle and away from the smoke. Rouge began coughing heavily in the smoke and she staggered up onto her feet, using the rock she was laying against to help herself up. Rouge then stopped coughing and suddenly realized something. The smoke WASN'T poisonous at all! She was completely alright! The smoke that had come out of the spherical object was just normal smoke that makes you cough, nothing harmful at all! Rouge began to wonder what was going on. Who in their right mind would

throw a non-lethal smoke-bomb at Team Diamond? And who threw it in the first place? Rouge was about to find the answer sooner than she thought for after the smoke had cleared, somebody stepped out of the nearby bushes and strode up to her. Rouge heard the figure coming and she turned around only to see it was a little blue-furred female fox about twelve years of age with lavender hair, black shoes with purple toe-sections and a utility belt with a shoulder-strap over her left shoulder and full of steel orbs. It was of course, the notorious super-spy Sora Sumdac, member of the M.S.I.U. and supposedly long lost sister of Tails. Sora had her arms folded and a cold expression on her face, suggesting that she wasn't too pleased with that was going on right now.

"So sorry about the smoke Miss Rouge the Bat, I merely threw that little smoke bomb to scare off Team Diamond and save your life." she explained to the curious bat.

"Huh? Hey honey, who are you and how the heck do you know my name?!" demanded Rouge furiously.

"The name's Sora Sumdac, originally Sora Prower, and I am one of the top spies of the M.S.I.U." explained Sora "I am also Tails' older sister and I haven't seen my little brother since I was four years old."

"Wow…" said Rouge "So I'm face-to-face with a member of the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit AND the older sister of Sonic's best friend Tails? And just when I thought this day couldn't get even more surprising! So if you're related to Tails then how come you identify yourself as "formerly Sora Prower" and how come Tails never spoke of you before?"

"Because he doesn't know who I really am and I was sadly given up at a young age due to our parents being incapable of raising two children thanks to money troubles." muttered Sora "Tails was only a few months old when I was given up so he was too young to remember me and thus, he's grown up without even knowing he has a sister. I ended up forgetting I had a brother until I saw him again and he triggered some memories in my head after we'd stopped the Region of Rebellious Reptiles from wrecking the Annual Acorn Awards a few months ago."

"Whoa." said Rouge "Boy, Tails will be surprised when he finds out he has a super-spy sister. So anyways, thanks for saving my life out there sweetheart. I appreciate it. But why are you here may I ask? And you haven't told me how you know my name."

"I've been spying on Team Diamond for a while now." explained Sora "And the M.S.I.U. has been studying about H.U.N.T. for equally as long and we know all of Team Diamond's members, both former and current. We know who you are Rouge the Bat and that's not only because we studied about H.U.N.T. but because we heard all about you joining the R.F.S. in those alien invasions we've recently had."

"I see." said Rouge "So if I were to guess, you're here trying to capture Team Diamond and arrest them?" she asked.

"Correct." said Sora "But I really am not equipped for an arrest right now. I just slipped a tracker onto their hover saucer while they were attempting to kill you and I threw the smoke bomb at them to scare them off and save you. Now I have a tracker on the saucer, I can track their every move and finally capture them for real for I'm gonna go back to base and properly prepare myself."

"Great!" said Rouge happily "That's the most those demons deserve for all they've done! So, do you mind if I join you? I've got scores to settle with those jokers. They killed my dad and robbed my shop when I was a little girl and now they've stolen my treasure and attempted to kill me just for betraying them. Please allow me the honours of getting back at them."

Sora put a finger to her lips in thought, not really sure if she should let the bat join her or not.

"Hmm…I dunno Rouge." said Sora doubtfully "It's too dangerous for you. They'll kill you the moment they see you, you know? And they're so skilled and lethal too, I don't wanna risk your life trying to arrest them Rouge."

"Don't worry kid, I can handle myself." said Rouge "I'm trained in espionage myself so I can help you in the spying business. I also know Team Diamond more than anyone else since I used to be one

of their members so I'll be a liability to you in this mission."

"Hmm…you do have a point Rouge." said Sora agreeably "OK, you're in. I'll take you and my good friend Joel Nutmeg on a mission to capture Team Diamond and bring them to justice once and for all. They've committed too many crimes for my liking."

"I agree." said Rouge "Quick question, how do you know of them anyway? H.U.N.T. are so secretive that nobody knows about them."

"I'm a spy. Nuff said." retorted Sora, pulling a cheeky smile at Rouge "Now if I heard you correctly earlier, you said they've stolen a treasure of yours. What is it?"

"The Key of Opulence." replied Rouge.

Sora's face went pale at the sound of that. Rouge studied Sora's expression and wondered what was up with the little girl. It seemed as if a zombie has just walked in front of her and made her freak out for a second.

"Um…Sora? You OK?" asked Rouge worriedly.

"No…they can't have that key!" shrieked Sora "They must NOT have that key! We have GOT to get it back!"

"Why? What's the matter?" asked Rouge "You make it sound like it's the end of the world or something."

"That's because the Key of Opulence has a deadly power!" exclaimed Sora "I've read all about it when reading about places on Mobius! It has the ability to open doors in airspace and behind those doors will be any kind of treasure the user imagines. But this is the deadly part: if you use it more than THREE times, the user turns into a golden entity with a mammoth greed for wealth that's primary purpose is to turn the entire world into gold! If Team Diamond use that key, they can turn all of Mobius into gold with a wave of their hands! Life on Mobius will cease to be for it'll all be turned into solid gold! We could become golden statues with a simple prod of the finger if they end up using the key to the point they become gold crazy monsters! We must not let them have that key and find out

what it can do!"

Rouge couldn't believe her ears at what Sora had just told her.

"No way…the Key of Opulence can't possibly do that can it?" asked Rouge.

"It most certainly can!" screamed Sora "The historical records even list dates of when people got turned into golden entities after using the Key of Opulence more than three times. These dates are often referred to as "The Days The World Nearly Ended" as they came close to turning Mobius into a golden paradise. We must get that key back immediately!"

"Indeed." said Rouge agreeably "I promised dad on his deathbed I would find it and I'm gonna get it back from Team Diamond! When I get it, I'll keep it in storage and make sure its power NEVER gets used at all. I never use jewels for their powers, only for their beauty and value to me."

"That's good Rouge." said Sora "Now, we haven't a moment to lose. We've got to find Team Diamond and get that key before they work out how to use it. Thanks to me putting a tracker on their saucer, we'll find them in no time."

"Way ahead of ya honey." said Rouge, flying off eagerly and carrying Sora by the arms as she flew "Lead me to your headquarters and we can get ready to hunt down the treasure-hunters of H.U.N.T."

So Rouge flew off into the sky and over the Tropical Jungle with Sora in her hands. Rouge had no idea that she had just potentially found a doomsday treasure and that Team Diamond held it in their hands right now. She had to prevent them from working out how the key works otherwise Mobius will become a giant golden paradise of jewels and gold statues with no life left on it…

And that's it for this story! Tune back into Heroes of Mobius for Sora and Rouge are now striving to retrieve the Key of

Opulence! Can they get it back in time or will Team Diamond figure out how it works and go crazy with it to the point they become golden entities? Find out for a new story begins in the main series, Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius...

So everybody, how was this for a backstory for Rouge? Good? Bad? Eh? Feel free to say what you thought in the review section below. Please review this, I'd love to hear some feedback. :)

Rise of a Warrior Princess 1

Arc 19: Rise of a Warrior Princess

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 154-155

Part 1: A Childhood Destroyed

Chun-Nan had been through quite a lot just recently to say that only a day had passed. First the Pagoda of Prosperity had been destroyed in an attempted assassination of the emperor and princess of Chun-Nan*, then a tear in the sky had randomly appeared and took all of the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and the Spiders of Anarchy sans Lord Sycorax, Romeo and Vladek** and then Chun-Nan had experienced its first bout with dragons in centuries which ended up costing the life of Master Kai Zen, the mentor of Chun-Nan's mighty and beautiful princess Dalon Matilda***. Chun-Nan had much to recover from but some good was already coming to the country. The pagoda of Prosperity was being rebuilt at this very moment but that wasn't all. Queen Sally Acorn and Emperor Dalon Tai had formed an alliance between kingdoms before the Pagoda of Prosperity had been destroyed and now the R.F.S. was setting up the first batch of communications equipment needed for the country to remain in contact with New Mobotropolis and vice-versa. The equipment consisted of some radio towers and communication arrays. Emperor Tai was instructing the builders on which places to set up the towers and arrays for he didn't want them to look too out of place and to be put in an area where it might not settle well with the populace. The builders had been patient with the emperor's directing and planning out for they understood him perfectly and finally, as the evening began to come, everything had been decided and some building work had started. In a good few weeks, the communications systems would be online and Chun-Nan would be in contact with New Mobotropolis. Tai had to admit that as ancient and traditional Chun-Nan was, maybe it was time to have some modern technology in the country for once. And this technology was going to be very handy for Chun-Nan since they'd

be able to contact the Royal Fighters and call for help should they need it and the R.F.S. could call them for help too since there's many countries in the world and many of them would need help at some point. It made Tai feel good to think that Chun-Nan would be a part of the R.F.S. and it would contribute to the organization's constant battle for freedom. Truly no greater honour could be bestowed upon Chun-Nan then that, contributing to the R.F.S. in their battle against evil.

While all the work had been going on though, Princess Matilda had invited Sally over to Bladefeather's pagoda for dinner. Since the Pagoda of Prosperity was destroyed and now currently being repaired, Matilda and Tai had moved into Bladefeather's pagoda for the time being. Bladefeather had been all too happy to let them occupy the extra-space, especially since he and Matilda were now engaged to be married. Bladefeather wasn't home right now though; he was with the emperor and overseeing the construction of the communications equipment too. It was just Sally and Matilda alone together in the pagoda, kneeling on cushions at a low flat table and eating dinner together. Sally had opted to stay behind in Chun-Nan and oversee operations as well as help Chun-Nan recuperate from what had happened recently and give Matilda some extra comfort over the loss of Master Kai. Sally sympathized with Matilda more than she knew for she'd lost people dear to her too…her parents, both slaughtered mercilessly by Marik the Martian last year****and their deaths forcing her to take position of queen prematurely. Despite doing well at her job, Sally still felt that she had become queen before she was ready. Right now, the girls were only really thinking about what they were eating though. They had been made a dinner of noodles and rice with poppadams and soy sauce along with cups of Chun-Nan tea by Bladefeather himself. The falcon was quite an efficient cook and the girls were quite enjoying this dinner. As Sally put some more noodles into her mouth, carefully manoeuvring the chopsticks she picked them up with to make sure she didn't drop them, she couldn't help but "mmm" in delight as the flavour of the noodles made her taste buds dance with joy.

"Mmm…wow." said Sally, swallowing what was in her mouth "Bladefeather sure is a great cook isn't he?"

"Oh he is." said Matilda, taking a mouthful of rice and then swallowing it "He cooks better than me that's for sure. I'm hopeless I am. All I can do is make wantons and that's it. Guess I'm the exception when they say "All women should do is cook"."

Sally chuckled a little at that statement.

"Well I never believed women should only cook, women can do whatever men can do as well." said Sally, picking up some more noodles with her chopsticks.

"Oh I agree." said Matilda brightly "I never understood why anyone would be so patronizing towards women anyway. I'm not patronizing towards men and I'm sure a lot of other women aren't so no need for it really."

"Agreed." said Sally, taking a mouthful of noodles.

Matilda took a poppadam and she scooped some noodles and rice up onto the crispy disc-shaped food. She then took a bite out of the poppadam, enjoying the mix of flavours her tongue was met with as she bit into it. She liked to mix her food up a bit, it made it more enjoyable for her. Matilda swallowed what was in her mouth and ate more and more until the poppadam was all gone. Then suddenly, as she swallowed what was left of it, she put her hands on her stomach and let fly a rather sudden belch. She didn't even cover her mouth when she did it, she just did it loud and proud like any stereotypical bloke would. Sally gasped at Matilda, dropping her chopsticks in horror. Never before had she seen such bad table manners, and coming from a princess no less! What kind of etiquette did Matilda learn?! The etiquette of a pig?!

"Matilda…that's very rude you know…" whispered Sally hoarsely, her face contorting with shock.

"Oh no Sally, it's quite alright." assured Matilda "In Chun-Nan, it's polite to burp after your meals. Please don't be offended." she said, looking a little worried.

"Oh I see." said Sally, softening up a little "I'm sorry, I should have known really. Well, if that's the case I might try when I've finished

eating."

Sooner or later, Sally finished off her dinner and she sat back, letting her food digest away for a minute. Then suddenly, she let fly a rather colossal belch that sounded like a proper man belch. Sally gaped at how loud she had burped and she put her hands over her mouth, blushing bright red. Matilda however just laughed. She had never heard a woman burp so loudly before, especially one who didn't live in Chun-Nan.

"Oh Sally that was hysterical!" she giggled "You sure you don't do that more often?!"

I am NEVER doing that again! Sally fumed in her mind.

"No…never. Where I live, it's considered very rude to loudly emit flatulent noises of any kind." said Sally, uncovering her mouth "So this is definitely a first for me. Can't say I'll do it again though."

"Oh well, least you tried something new." said Matilda with a smile.

"Yeah." said Sally "So, how are you feeling now?" she asked kindly.

"Oh…still a little sad over my master's death." said Matilda glumly, putting her elbows on the table and resting her head in her hands "I still can't believe after all these years with him…he's gone…actually gone. I can hardly imagine life without him since he's been such a big influence on me and my kung-fu abilities. I know I'm supposed to move on and learn without him but…I don't think I'll be able to." she said, looking like she was going to cry again.

"Don't say that Matilda, you're a very strong and very brave woman." said Sally reassuringly "I've seen you in action Matilda, you fought honourably and you showed that you were willing to do whatever it took to save your kingdom, even fight a dragon. You'll be able to manage, believe me. It maybe hard at first but you'll get there. I know exactly how it feels to lose a loved one…" she said, looking down at the table sadly.

"Really?" said Matilda in surprise "Have you lost someone close to you Sally?"

"Oh yes." said Sally, wiping a tear away from her eye "I lost my mom and dad last year. They were killed by a demon from another world. They were the King and Queen of Mobotropolis and they were both killed just so the demon could take over. I was even targeted. I lived whereas my parents died and I had to take over as queen. But I always feel that I was too early and that I took the role too prematurely. I wish my parents were still here…" she said "I miss them so much and…and…I wish they could see me as the fighter I am now!"

She then suddenly broke down and cried into her hands. Sally rarely ever let her parent's deaths get to her but this time, she couldn't help herself. As she wept away, Matilda looked at her pityingly, feeling very sorry for the squirrel queen. She knew all too well what it was like to lose a parent for she'd lost her mother when she was just a child so she could sympathize with poor Sally. Matilda got up from the table and she walked over to Sally. She knelt down beside Sally and gave her a comforting, friendly hug. Sally graciously returned the hug and wiped the tears out of her eyes.

"Thank you Matilda." she said gratefully.

"You're welcome Sally." said Matilda softly "I sympathize with you more than you know. I've lost my mother and I still grieve about her to this day. Hearing about the loss of your parents just brings back those memories of losing mother."

"Really?" said Sally "I'm so sorry to hear that. I imagine your dad's quite distraught over losing your mother too."

"Oh he is." said Matilda sadly, breaking up the hug and clasping her hands together "There's never a day where he doesn't pray to the heavens and wish mother well up there with the ancient ancestors. Oh how we wish we could have her back…"she added, wiping a tear from her eye.

"Aww, that's so sad." said Sally pityingly "You've certainly been through some hard times in your life haven't you?"

"You bet I have." said Matilda glumly "But its part of life as they say: You go through good times and bad times and you have to make the

most of the good times when you get them. They also say "Challenges make a person stronger". It's certainly the case with me."

"I can see that." said Sally "And those are very wise words you've learnt Matilda. Say mind if I ask you something?" she suddenly asked.

"Sure go ahead." said Matilda.

"How on Mobius did a woman as polite and pleasant as you come to learn such a violent sport?" asked Sally curiously "I mean, a woman of your etiquette would normally consider kung-fu uncouth wouldn't she?"

Matilda was rather surprised to receive such a question. Nobody had really asked her that before so it was surprising to receive such a question.

"Oh…well…nobody's asked me that before." said Matilda "But very well, I shall tell you the story of my rise from princess to kung-fu warrior princess. It's going to be a pretty long story since there's much to tell so don't expect all of it tonight."

"Please, take your time your grace." said Sally gently "I'm a very patient woman after all."

"Very well, let us begin." started Matilda "The story actually begins at the day my dad first met my mom. Through dad, I know this story and now I pass it on to you. In dad's own words; it all started a long time ago in the quiet village of Chun-Nan, a whole two years before I was born…"

Chun-Nan, the marketplace, twenty-four years ago…

Twenty-four years ago and Chun-Nan still looked as beautiful in that day as it did now. The villages of the holy country were alive with bustling citizens going about their normal lives and teaming with colour and beauty. The marketplace was a very popular place to go to in Chun-Nan. It was jam-packed with stalls all selling various bits

of this and that ranging from pottery to jewellery to historical relics to simple trinkets and food supplies. There was something for everybody in the happy marketplace and every stall had at least one person buying from it. The marketplace brought a new meaning to the phrase "There's something for everybody". Among the many people roaming the marketplace was a much-younger Emperor Tai (he's twenty-eight in this time). He was looking to see what was on offer at the marketplace today and right now, he was at a pottery stall and looking at an urn that was made with white hardened clay and decorated with blue painted flowers. The urn looked very nice and Tai seemed interested in buying it. The seller, who was a Mobian warthog wearing a robe and a monocle, tried his best to convince Tai to buy it.

"You seem interested in this fine urn my good ruler." said the warthog "Take it if you so wish, you've got yourself a beauty there and it's all for a bargain price of only 200 Mobiums. You won't regret it, believe me."

Tai just laughed.

"Oh my good sir, you needn't make such a fuss." he said "I quite like this urn and I'd be all too happy to buy it from you."

"Ah very good sir! You've given me great honour today!" cheered the warthog happily.

"The honour's all mine." said Tai, handing over 200 Mobiums to pay for the precious urn.

The warthog took the money and he shook hands with Tai, happy to have done business with him. Tai smiled at the warthog and he turned away from the stall, walking off to another one which sold some interesting looking trinkets. However, as Tai peered over to the stall to have a look at what was on offer, a stranger in a robe suddenly pounced on him from behind and held a dagger to his throat! Tai cried out in surprise as he was suddenly grabbed and held at knifepoint by the stranger. He dropped his recently purchased urn onto the ground as he was grabbed, the urn smashing to pieces as it crashed down onto the ground and earning a horrified gasp from Tai. He gasped again when he saw that there

was more than one person pointing a dagger at him. There were three more men in robes and they all prepared to skewer him alive. Everybody in the marketplace grew worried for Tai as they saw him get grabbed and surrounded by the four robed men and they all wondered what to do. Tai squirmed in the grasp of his ambusher.

"Ack! Unhand me at once vile person!" choked Tai, trying to sound brave "You cannot manhandle the Emperor of Chun-Nan like this!"

"Do we look like morons who fall under the law?" sniffed the robed figure who was holding him at knifepoint "We are simple ninja-thieves and we want your enormous fortune emperor."

"Give us all your riches your royal highness or somebody's going to be sold as a knife block!" snarled another robed figure that was pointing a dagger at him.

"I won't be giving you heathens a single Mobium!" growled Tai "I do not give money to those who wish to seize it and steal it from others!"

"Then you die! Simple as!" snarled the leader "Boys, skewer this fool alive!"

"No! No please, no!" begged Tai as the three figures pointing daggers at him raised their daggers and prepared to stab him to death "Let me go! Don't kill me please!"

The figures ignored him and they aimed their daggers at Tai's body and prepared to finish him off. Tai closed his eyes and waited for the killer blows to come to him.

"Hey! Let that poor man go right now!" yelled a female voice that made the robed figures stand still and look over their shoulders in surprise.

Tai opened his eyes and saw that somebody had dared to stand up to the figures that were plotting death to him. And that somebody was a twenty year old female Mobian mongoose with dark yellow fur, blue eyes and raven black hair that was tied up in a bun and had a long ponytail that trailed down her back. She had red fingernails

and she wore a purple robe with an orange sash tied around her waist. She had a large golden necklace around her neck and she had singular thin eyelashes. She was very beautiful too with a nice slender body and a lovely face but she looked deathly serious and like she was about to beat somebody up. The robed figures let go of Tai and they all stormed up to the woman, ready to stab her for interfering with them.

"This is none of your business doll-face!" snarled the leader "Get back in line or get skewered!"

"If anybody's being picked on by you vermin, it is EASILY my business!" retorted the mongoose "Now get out of this village and never pick on anyone again or I'll break all your arms!"

"Oooh, tough girl are we?" sneered the leader "Well we'll show you! Get her boys!" he ordered.

The robed figures advanced on the mongoose and they prepared to stab her with their daggers. The mongoose however was no ordinary woman. This was a kung-fu mistress standing before them now. The mongoose cracked her knuckles and then she cut loose on the robed figures. She punched one of them in the face and knocked him down heavily onto his back, the impact knocking the figure out. Another robed man slashed at her with his dagger but the mongoose dodged the attack by bending over backwards. She threw herself forward and then head butted the robed man in the face, causing him to drop his dagger. The mongoose picked up the dagger and used it to block an attack from the third robed figure. She slashed at the figure and managed to wrench the dagger out of his hand. She then slashed the third robed figure across the chest with the dagger and kicked him in the gut. The robed man was brought down onto the ground, clutching his aching gut. The second robed man, the one who lost his dagger, punched at the mongoose but she caught his fist and punched him in the gut. She then spun around and kicked the man down onto the ground. The three robed figures ran for their lives, deciding that this girl was too tough for them. The leader was gobsmacked to see how tough the woman was but he didn't hesitate to fight. He charged towards the woman with the dagger aimed ahead of himself. The mongoose jumped over the leader and she dropkicked him in the head as she sailed

over him. The man was brought down onto his face by the kick. He picked himself up only to be punched four times by the mongoose and then uppercut in the face. The attack brought him down onto his back, clutching his face and wondering what had hit him. The mongoose then picked the man up by the collar of his robe and she glared at him.

"Get. out." she snarled menacingly "And do not traipse around here again."

The leader was all too happy to oblige. The mongoose let him go and he ran for his life. He fled the marketplace as fast he could possibly run. Tai was taken aback by the sheer skill of this woman and he walked up to her, hoping to thank her for her kindness in saving him from the robed men. The woman dusted her hands off and looked at Tai. Tai stared at the mongoose and suddenly found himself thinking that she looked beautiful. In fact, she was the most beautiful woman Tai had ever seen. What luck to be saved by such a lovely looking mongoose was one thing Tai immediately thought in his head.

"H-hello there…um…thank you for saving my life miss. " he said politely.

"No problem handsome." said the mongoose flirtingly "I'm a kung-fu mistress doing my job after all. Say…you are pretty nice looking sir." she said, looking into Tai's eyes and finding herself beginning to quite like the look of him "I like your robe and all, you look very handsome indeed. What's your name?"

Tai could hardly stop himself from blushing at those remarks.

"Why…thank you young woman…" he said slowly "I'm f-f-flattered to hear y-y-you say th-those words. Ahem…my name's Dalon Tai by the way, Emperor of Chun-Nan."

The mongoose looked shocked to hear that.

"Oh my gosh! You're the emperor?!" she shrieked in surprise "Oh gosh…I just hit on the Emperor of Chun-Nan! Oh goodness me how embarrassing! I'm sorry your majesty I…"

"No need to apologize whatsoever." said Tai quickly "I don't mind people complimenting my appearance. Please don't be embarrassed miss."

"Oh OK then. Sorry about that." said the mongoose, trying to hide her blushing cheeks from Tai.

"It's OK." said Tai kindly "You saved my life, I'm all too happy to be complimented. So what's your name fair lady of great strength and skill?" he asked politely.

The mongoose blushed bright red.

"Hee, hee, hee! Aren't you charming?" she giggled "Ahem…my name is Fa Tiana, kung-fu mistress and at the master stage of kung-fu. It's an honour to meet you emperor."

"It's an honour to meet a woman as beautiful and honourable as you." said Tai, taking Tiana's hand and kissing it politely "I still thank you for saving my life."

"Aw…you're quite welcome." said Tiana shyly, quite liking the kiss on the hand she got from Tai.

"In fact, as a way of saying thank you, I'd be honoured if you'd have dinner with me tonight Tiana." said Tai "Do you expect my invitation?"

"Oh yes please." said Tiana brightly "It would be lovely to have dinner with you emperor. I'll be over at the Pagoda of Prosperity as soon as possible."

"Wonderful." said Tai "I shall see you then my dear."

Tiana smiled at Tai and then she turned around and left the marketplace. Tai watched Tiana go and then he turned and left the marketplace. He'd just been saved by the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen and now he was going to have dinner with her tonight. What a good day this was turning out to be. He couldn't wait for tonight. Little would he realize is that woman who saved him would end up becoming his future wife and Empress of Chun-Nan… and also the mother of a very, very special girl who would be known

by the name of Dalon Matilda…

Present Day…

"…and that's how my parents met apparently." Matilda concluded.

"That's amazing." said Sally, awestruck by the story she'd just heard "Your mother knew kung-fu and she saved your dad with it? I guess that's where your kung-fu comes from."

"In a way…it is." said Matilda with a rather sad smile on her face "Many people often think I'm like the closest living person to being like mother currently alive. It honours me to think that I'm like my mother, graceful, powerful, kind and honourable. No wonder me and dad loved her so much…" she added.

"So when did they get married?" asked Sally eagerly, clearly interested in this story of Matilda's.

"Two years after they had met." explained Matilda "Mother and father started dating after their first meal together and eventually, they married. Their marriage went down in history as one of Chun-Nan's most memorable weddings ever. Then nine months after the marriage, mom gave birth to me. She described me as being "The cutest thing that's ever walked upon Chun-Nan soil" when I was a baby."

"Aww…that's nice." said Sally, awed to hear something like that.

"Isn't it just?" sighed Matilda happily "Hey wait here a moment, I've got something to show you."

Matilda got up from the table and she ran off to a chest of drawers in the corner of the room. She picked something up that stood on top of the drawers and she came back to the table. She handed it to Sally. Sally looked at what she had just been given. It was a charred picture frame with a picture of Emperor Tai, Empress Tiana and a baby Princess Matilda all together and smiling happily together. They looked very happy in that picture they did.

"It's a little something I managed to retrieve from the Pagoda of Prosperity's remains." explained Matilda "It's me and my parents altogether and as you can see, I'm just a little baby in that picture. Isn't it wonderful?"

"It's a lovely picture Matilda." said Sally with awe "And you look so adorable as a baby. Aww…Tai and Tiana must have been very proud when you were born." she added kindly.

"Oh they were so happy that even a rainy day didn't dampen their spirits." said Matilda "They called me "the greatest joy they've ever had", especially when I was growing up. I'm so honoured that I made two people so happy just by being born…just a pity that only one of them's still happy now." she said sadly.

"That reminds me…" said Sally, putting the picture down on the table "What happened to Tiana? How did she die? I understand if you don't want to tell that story."

"It's perfectly fine Sally." said Matilda tightly "You're a guest of honour and you wanted to know the story of my ascendance to kung-fu warrior so you need to know everything. Besides, mother's death plays a big part in the story so here we go. It all happened when I was five years old and we were trekking through the bamboo woods…"

Chun-Nan, the bamboo woods, 17 years ago…

It was a beautiful sunny day in Chun-Nan and right now, the happy royal couple of Emperor Tai and Empress Tiana were taking the adorable and curious Princess Matilda for a walk in the bamboo woods that were not too far away from the Pagoda of Prosperity. Matilda had been very excited since she loved to go out and see new things. As a child, Matilda wore a cute little green dress and walked around barefooted. Her hair was down over her shoulders too and styled differently to how it is now. She was very excitable, very inquisitive and just a bundle of fun. A very different personality from the Matilda we all know and love indeed. As the royal couple walked hand-in-hand through the bamboo woods together, Matilda

toddled in front and was excitedly pointing at this and that.

"Oh look at those big sticks sticking out of the ground mommy!" squealed Matilda, running over to a bamboo tree "They're gianormous!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh indeed they are sweetheart." laughed Tiana.

"Can I climb up one? Please, please, please, please, pleeeeeeeease?" begged Matilda, giving Tiana the puppy-dog eyes.

"No dear, those trees are not for climbing up I'm afraid." said Tiana sternly "Oh look, there's some rocks over there!" she gasped in a pseudo-excited voice that a parent often uses to motivate a child "You can climb on those if you like!" she added, pointing at a pile of easily-climbable rocks that were nearby.

"Wheeeeeee!" cried Matilda "Thanks mommy!"

Matilda eagerly ran over to the rocks and began to climb up them. Matilda was pretty brave, even as a child after all. Matilda climbed up the rocks slowly and clumsily, making sure not to hurt herself as she did so.

"Be careful dear!" Tai called out to the little mongoose as she climbed the rocks.

"Relax sweetie, she knows what she's doing." said Tiana reassuringly, stroking Tai's hand.

"It doesn't take much to worry you does it angel?" laughed Tai, stroking Tiana's hand as she stroked his.

"Believe me, I worry when the situation is worrying to me." said Tiana with a wink "A bunch of rocks isn't going to get me worried about little Matilda. She's a good climber after all."

"I'll say…" said Tai, watching as Matilda carefully hoisted herself up onto the rock pile and she stood up in a victory pose, clearly pleased with herself that she'd made it to the top.

"Look mommy! Look daddy! I climb-ed all the way up to the top!" she

hollered excitedly in her adorable toddler voice.

"Very good Matilda! Well done!" Tai praised, clapping his hands "You're a very clever girl you are Matilda."

"Very good precious, you sure climbed that rock pile." said Tiana brightly "Please come down now."

Matilda did as she was told and she climbed slowly down the rocks, making sure not to slip as she did so. Tai and Tiana just watched Matilda and they awed over her as she made it to the bottom of the pile.

"She's so precious." said Tiana happily "I'm so glad that she's our little princess."

"I am too." said Tai gleefully "She's brought so much joy into our lives. The greatest honour of my life is having her for a daughter, as well as having you as my wife."

"Oh Tai, you're too kind." chuckled Tiana "You and Matilda are my greatest honours too."

Tai chuckled and then he and Tiana had a little kiss with each other. When you have a child around, you have to keep it clean after all. Matilda toddled back up to her parents and awed at her parents kissing. She thought it was cute even if she wasn't fully sure what it was.

"Aw…kissy-kissy." giggled Matilda, making kissing noises in appreciation.

Tai and Tiana could only laugh at their precious little girl as she said that. Children were so adorable at times, they really were. Shame they weren't children forever but oh well, you're only young once as they say. Tai and Tiana were going to miss this bout of adorableness from Matilda when she grew up so they were making the most of it while she was still a kid. After Tai and Tiana had finished kissing, Matilda toddled off for she'd seen something else interesting. A rather large molehill standing near some bushes. Matilda threw herself into the molehill and started throwing the soil

around, giggling away like a happy little clown. She ended up getting very dirty as she played in the molehill. Tai and Tiana laughed at her.

"I would be telling her off for getting dirty but seriously, this is too cute!" giggled Tiana.

"I wonder who's turn it is to bath her this time when we get home?" sniggered Tai.

"I'll do it, I can't trust you to bathe the little princess." chuckled Tiana "Remember what happened last time you bathed her?"

"Too well my pet." said Tai with a little chuckle.

"Hey, while Matilda's playing I'd like to tell you something dear." said Tiana, lowering her voice and hoping Matilda wasn't listening.

"Oh. What is it love?" asked Tai.

"You know that I'm a kung-fu mistress?" whispered Tiana "Well… when Matilda gets older…I'd like for her to take kung-fu lessons and become a kung-fu warrior like me. We could do with some extra protection in our pagoda after all."

"You want Matilda to learn kung-fu?" blurted Tai in surprise "But… you know the risks she'll partake in. It'll be very dangerous for her you know."

"I know, I've been there remember?" retorted Tiana "Still, I'd love it if Matilda became a kung-fu warrior, it'd give me a great honour to see our precious daughter become as mighty as the greatest martial artists in history. I'll only do it if you agree to this though."

"Well Tiana, I don't see why I should stop you." said Tai softly "Your skills have kept our family safe for years, it'd be great to see Matilda live up in your footsteps. I think we should go ahead with this and you could be her teacher."

"Great." said Tiana "I just hope I can convince Matilda to learn those lessons though since she's…a little headstrong about violence and her hatred of it. That's the worrying part for me."

"MOMMY, DADDY, HELP!" screamed Matilda at the top of her voice, alerting the two parents and catching their attention immediately.

They stared over at the molehill Matilda had been playing in and to their horror, the molehill had scattered into chunks of soil and an enormous mole wearing black ninja-attire was standing menacingly above Matilda, his sharp claws bared and his eyes narrowed down angrily. Matilda backed away from the mole, terrified of it and staring directly at it in fear.

"How dare you trespass in MoleTerritory little heathen!" snarled the mole "Now you will pay for this by being a slave for us in our underground villages!"

"No! Stay away from me you ugly monster!" wailed Matilda as the mole prepared to grab her.

"Wait! Please wait!" cried Tiana "Leave our little girl alone! She didn't mean to trespass on your molehill sir! She's just a little girl, she was only playing! Honest she was!"

"Wait a minute…" said the mole, glowering at Tiana "You're the empress of Chun-Nan! Empress Tiana is it? We've heard much about you. You beat up four of my best students seven years ago before you became empress…" he added with a snarl in his voice.

Tiana gasped in horror to hear that.

"Those people were your students?!" she gasped "So you must have sent them to try and rob the emperor all those years ago!"

"Indeed I was." said the mole "And now you'll pay for interfering with my student's robbery all those years ago!"

"You threaten my daughter and now you threaten me!" growled Tiana "Have you no honour? I'll see to it that you never dig another tunnel again!"

"You're a fool to challenge the Clan of the Moles!" growled the mole, baring his razor sharp claws and itching to slice Tiana to ribbons with them "We will tear you apart empress!"

With that said, a whole bunch of ninja moles suddenly erupted from the ground, leaving giant molehills as they did so, and they all surrounded Emperor Tai, Empress Tiana and Princess Matilda, their claws bared and their faces contorting with loathing. Their gaze was directed more on Tiana though since she was the big enemy for them. They advanced on her menacingly, ready to eviscerate her. Matilda clutched her father's leg in terror.

"Daddy, I'm scared!" she whimpered.

"Don't worry precious, your mother will take care of those horrible moles." said Tai reassuringly.

"Tai, get Matilda out of here now." ordered Tiana "I won't have her getting tangled up in this at all."

Tai did as he was told and he ran for it with Matilda in his arms. The moles didn't bother with him or Matilda though since they were more bothered about Empress Tiana. She had ruined a thievery attempt of theirs seven years ago so she had to pay for it after all. Tiana just, rather calmly, dared the moles to do their worst. One mole lunged at Tiana and tried to slash her with his claws. Tiana dodged the attack and grabbed the mole by the wrists. She twisted them sharply and made the mole scream in pain. Another mole tried to attack with his claws but Tiana held the first mole's claws up and blocked the attack. She kicked the first mole into the other mole and sent them both sprawling onto the ground. Another mole dug underground in hopes of coming up beneath Tiana and catching her by surprise. Tiana however knew the tactics of a ninja mole all too well. Moles were woefully predictable. They always tried subterranean subterfuge and thus, she always knew what they were going to do. Tiana leaped up into the air and landed on the head of another mole that was waiting to attack. The mole that had dug underground popped up to the surface only to find out that Tiana had moved and Tiana sprang off of the mole she was standing on. She dropkicked the mole that had dug in the face and sent him hurling across the woods. The mole crashed directly into a bamboo tree and was instantly knocked out by the crash. His face was twisted into a very gormless grin that made him look very silly indeed. Two moles jumped into the air towards Tiana. Jumping towards a kung-fu warrior of any kind is never a good idea though for Tiana just leaped

up and split-kicked the two moles down onto the ground. Tiana grabbed one of the moles she'd just kicked down and she kicked it as hard as she could, sending it hurling through the air and crashing into another mole. Tiana grabbed the other mole she'd kicked down and then held it in front of her as another mole lunged at her with his claws. This resulted in the mole accidentally plunging his claws into the mole Tiana was using as a shield, killing it instantly. The mole gasped at his mistake and Tiana smirked at it, kicking the dead mole into it and knocking the mole down onto his back. Another mole tried to attack Tiana but Tiana jumped onto a bamboo tree, bent it down very far and then let go of it, causing it to swing forward and smack the mole in the face. Tiana laughed as the mole was smacked by the bamboo tree. Unfortunately, her lucky streak was about to end. The lead mole had dug underground and had just come up directly behind Tiana. He raised his claws and he slashed Tiana in the back. The mongoose screamed in agonizing pain and she was brought down onto her knees in agony. She clutched her back and winced ever so tensely. Tai and Matilda gasped in horror and they cried out for Tiana. The lead mole cackled at her and then he uppercut Tiana through the air. Tiana hurled through the air and she came to a stop just at a bamboo tree. Tiana was now lying on her back and staring directly at the lead mole as he stood over her. Tiana gulped. She was cornered and badly injured, she was trapped now.

"Now time to make you pay for interfering with The Clan of the Moles you filthy little kung-fu heathen!" snarled the mole.

"Oh god no! Please, don't kill me!" begged Tiana "No, NO!"

The mole ignored her and he raised his claws above his head. Tai instantly darted out of his hiding place with Matilda in his arms and he aimed his finger forward, ready to nerve freeze the mole. He didn't make it in time though for the mole swung his claws down and plunged them into Tiana's neck. Tiana gasped out as she was penetrated and her arms fell limp beside her. Her eyes closed and her head leaned to one side, blood trickling from the hole in her neck. The lead mole smiled at his handiwork but he didn't get to celebrate it. Tai poked the lead mole in the back just after he'd killed Tiana and he was instantly frozen up like an ice sculpture. The lead mole collapsed onto the ground, unable to move for his nerves were

all frozen by Tai's attack. The entire clan was knocked out and beaten and the leader was frozen so Tai and Matilda could see to Tiana. Tai knelt down by his wife's side and he shook her feebly, hoping to revive her. Tiana didn't move though. Getting stabbed in the neck guaranteed a definite death. The mole had killed Tiana. Chun-Nan's empress was no more. Tai almost lost his mind with grief and he burst into tears, holding Tiana's hand and weeping over her. Matilda, being too young to understand this, didn't really know how to feel. She nervously approached Tiana and looked up at her father.

"Daddy? Why are you crying?" she asked worriedly "Is mommy OK?"

"I'm afraid…sob…mommy cannot be with us anymore…" sobbed Tai "Mommy is dead Matilda."

"D-d-dead?" Matilda questioned.

"Dead "means no longer alive" Matilda." explained Tai "Your mother…is no longer alive. She's gone now."

"G-g-gone?" whimpered Matilda "N-n-n-no…no! Mommy can't be gone! She's gonna be alright! I know she is!"

"I'm sorry precious but your mother has gone to meet the ancestors in heaven." said Tai between sobs "She's gone Matilda and there's nothing we can do about it. I'm so sorry dear."

"Oh no!" wailed Matilda, crying loudly and just about going mad with grief "No mommy! This is all my fault! If I hadn't made-ed that mole angry then he wouldn't have attack-ed us and killed mommy!"

She threw herself into Tai's arms and wailed at the top of her voice. Even the most stoic of people would find this heartbreaking, a five-year old girl crying over her mother's dead and blaming herself for it. Tai hugged Matilda back, crying along with her. This was Matilda's darkest day and Tai was going to have a hard time moving on from this horrific event. Tiana would be given a proper funeral once they got home and the whole country would grieve for such a strong-willed and inspirational woman like Tiana. Chun-Nan was truly

having its darkest hour…

Present Day

"…and that's how my mother met her untimely and undeserving end." finished Matilda, on the verge of breaking down right about now "She was killed by a clan of moles…and all because of me! Because of me!"

She then finished off by putting her head into her hands and wailing almost as loudly as she had done when Tiana died. As she wept away, Sally looked at Matilda and took in what she had heard. She had never heard such a heartbreaking story before and what made it even worse was that Matilda blamed herself for Tiana's death. Nothing could be worse then losing your loved ones and holding yourself responsible. Sally put her hands over her heart and she shook her head sadly as Matilda cried.

"That's such a sad story Matilda." said Sally sympathetically "What happened to your mother was just awful, and all while you were a child too."

"I know!" wailed Matilda "And it was all my fault this happened too! I got mother killed and I'll never forgive myself for it!"

"Matilda! How could you think something like that?" gasped Sally sternly "It was not your fault your mother died at all. You didn't get Tiana killed at all."

"Yes I did!" shouted Matilda, thumping the table in rage and making Sally leap back in surprise "If I hadn't played in that molehill then the mole wouldn't have come up and attacked us! Mother's death is my fault and I wish I never got her killed!"

"Matilda please, it wasn't your fault." said Sally gently "You didn't know that mole was going to come out of the molehill did you? Nobody could have anticipated the mole's presence in the woods. It wasn't your fault they attacked, you just mistakenly caught their attention and they reacted. They might have done it even if you

hadn't played in the molehill."

Matilda took in Sally's words and was amazed to think on how much sense she made. She had been beating herself up over nothing for all these years. How foolish she felt to think about this now. Matilda clamed down and wiped her eyes dry.

"I understand…I'm sorry I shouted." she said, sniffling a little.

"It's quite alright." said Sally "You know, I often blame myself for MY parent's deaths too. If I hadn't let Marik into Castle Acorn then they wouldn't be dead now. Unlike you, it really WAS my fault my parents died."

"Oh Sally, that's so sad." said Matilda "But I'm sure you didn't mean for your parents to die. Just like I didn't mean for mother to die…"

"Indeed." said Sally "But I don't spend every day constantly telling myself "It's my fault mom and dad are dead". I just moved on and am making it my priority to live up in their footsteps and also to make sure I never make the same mistake again…and cost anyone else's lives."

"That's a VERY good mindset Sally. I'm very proud to hear you say that." said Matilda happily "A good ruler tries as hard as he or she can to live up to their predecessors and makes up for their mistakes."

"I agree." said Sally, flattered to hear Matilda was proud of her "So… now in this story Tiana's dead. Does this lead up to your kung-fu abilities? When did you start learning kung-fu and how did you become tempted to do so?"

"That is a story for another day." said Matilda softly "It's late and I need my sleep now. Come back here tomorrow morning after breakfast and I shall tell you the rest."

"OK then." said Sally "Thanks for dinner and the story, it's been a lovely evening Matilda."

"You're quite welcome." said Matilda, hugging Sally in a friendly manner "Thank you for listening and offering your support."

"Anytime." said Sally happily "See you tomorrow Matilda."

"Goodnight Sally." said Matilda, breaking up the hug "See you tomorrow."

Sally smiled and she got up from the cushion she had been kneeling on. She left the pagoda and wandered off to find the R.F.S. She was going to sleep in a tent that the workers had brought with them to sleep in so they could continue the work tomorrow. As Sally left, Matilda left the table to get changed into her nightdress and go to bed. She was looking forward to seeing how the R.F.S. progress in their work and she began to wonder what Sally would think to the rest of her story. She certainly knew that Sally would be surprised to hear what was coming next…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Episode 152***

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Episode 153***

***** And then see *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Episode 154***

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Episode 21* (Going back a while aren't we?)**

So that's the first part of Matilda's captivating story. What did you think? Sad isn't it? Well you've not seen it all yet, there's three more parts to go so stay tuned! Get ready as next time, we learn on how difficult it was to get Matilda to learn kung-fu and how she was tempted. We'll also learn that it wasn't easy for her to learn kung-fu too...

Feedback will be much appreciated.

Rise of a Warrior Princess 2

Arc 19: Rise of a Warrior Princess

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 154-155

Part 2: Reluctance to Learn

Chun-Nan dawned bright and sunny. Just perfect weather for the R.F.S. builders to continue working on the communications equipment that was to be set up in Chun-Nan given the recent alliance between the Kingdom of Acorn and the Kingdom of Chun-Nan that had been formed between Emperor Tai and Queen Sally Acorn*. Sally herself was overseeing production with Emperor Tai doing most of the directing and planning and the whole process so far had gotten off to a nice start. Now morning was here, more work could be done. It was going to take a while yet but the work would be done in a few days time at the most. Sally had woken up, gotten dressed and had her breakfast already and now she'd gotten dressed, she went off to see Princess Matilda. She'd been interested in learning how Matilda came to be a kung-fu warrior and she was very excited about hearing the rest of the story. Sally arrived at Bladefeather the Falcon's pagoda where much to her surprise, she saw Matilda all dressed and standing in the back garden doing some exercise. Bladefeather was there too and he was watching Matilda exercise. Matilda appeared to be doing some staff training. She had a long, brown, wooden naginata (a bo-staff with a blade at the end) in her hands and she was thrusting it and doing twirls with it. There were targets on boards set up for her and it seemed the exercise was to hit the targets with the naginata. Sally was all too happy to watch this. She'd been practicing with her bladed-staff in her spare time and she wondered how Matilda would fare in this exercise. She spun the naginata around furiously and then she thrust forward at a target. She hit it…just outside the bull's eye. Matilda fumed for she was trying vigorously to improve her accuracy and yet it seemed she still couldn't quite get it. Matilda tried again, spinning the naginata around and thrusting it at another

target. She hit it just outside the bull's eye once again. Matilda yanked the blade out of the target and she fumed again.

"Grrr…why can't I do this?!" she grumbled "I've been practicing for years and I STILL can't get it exactly in the centre! I need to perfect this so my accuracy will be even greater and I'll be an even more efficient warrior than I already am."

"Still your jumpy nerves Matilda, anger rarely ever did a kung-fu master any good." noted Bladefeather.

"Thanks for telling me something I already know feather-head." fumed Matilda "OK…I'll try and keep calm now and I'll try again. After all, I'll never master inner peace if I just get angry during even something as small as a warm-up exercise."

"Even a warm-up exercise merits much power for a kung-fu warrior my beatific little beauty." said Bladefeather with a smile.

Matilda chuckled and then decided to try again. Sally watched intently, wondering if Matilda would succeed this time around. She held her breath as Matilda stepped away from the target and closed her eyes. She breathed in deeply, breathed out again and then raised the naginata. She opened her eyes and then spun around at lightning speed. She threw the naginata at the target like a javelin. The naginata impaled itself into the target and the blow was so hard that the naginata kept going until it finally impaled itself into the wooden beam that was holding the target up. A quarter of the staff had gone through the target. Matilda walked up to it curiously, wondering how she did. To her utmost delight, the staff had gone through the bull's eye! It wasn't bang on centre though, more or less on the side of the bull's eye but still, that was the best she'd done in a while. She was certainly improving that was for sure. Sally gasped at Matilda's well aimed shot and she smiled for the princess. Bladefeather also raised an eyebrow of approval at his fiancée.

"A most prodigious shot indeed flower." he said "It's perceptible that your skills are improving indeed."

"Thanks gorgeous." said Matilda appreciatively, taking the naginata out of the target "And also, thanks for watching over me, you serve

as an exemplary model for me now…my master's gone**." she added.

"You're more welcome than you realize sweetheart." said Bladefeather gently "Given how close you were to Master Kai, I think it's customary for you to have somebody watch over you and offer advice like how he did. I do apologize if I'm not much help given I wasn't raised beyond the master level of kung-fu."

"It's quite fine." said Matilda reassuringly "You're good enough Bladefeather. You helped me cool off enough to make that shot after all."

"My utmost thanks Matilda." said Bladefeather, giving Matilda a kiss on the hand politely and earning a cute little giggle from the princess.

"Good morning Matilda" Sally suddenly said, walking up to her "I must say, your skills with the staff are most…"

Suddenly, Matilda spun around and took Sally's legs out from underneath her with a sweeping kick and Sally was brought down onto her back, much to the squirrel's surprise. Matilda then pinned Sally down onto the ground with her foot and pointed the naginata's blade at her, earning a horrified gasp from the frightened queen.

"Thought you could sneak up on me eh you conniving little assassin?" she snarled coldly "Well now you know what happens if you try to sneak up on me don't you?"

"Matilda, please, it's me Sally!" shrieked Sally "I wasn't trying to sneak up on you at all! I'm sorry I startled you!"

Matilda just pointed the blade at Sally's throat, making Sally gulp in fear. Had Matilda suddenly forgotten who she was and was going to kill her or something? Then Matilda did something strange…she raised the naginata away from Sally and she laughed at her. Bladefeather could hardly refrain from laughing at Sally too.

"Hee, hee, hee, hee! Gotcha!" she chuckled, holding a hand out for Sally to take.

Sally sighed with relief and she took Matilda's hand. Matilda helped Sally back onto her feet. Sally dusted herself off and she glared at Matilda.

"OK, explain to me why you just did that Matilda!" she demanded sharply "I thought you were going to kill me! You scared the living daylights outta me!"

"I'm sorry Sally, I was just having a bit of fun." said Matilda guiltily "Please don't take umbrage, I didn't mean to upset you like that." she added, her face looking very sad indeed.

"Please your honour, my fiancée meant no harm." Bladefeather said supportively "Sometimes kung-fu masters do that as a sign of showing how good their reflexes are. An important lesson in kung-fu is to react quickly if someone tries to get the drop on you, Matilda was merely showcasing how well she does at that."

"Honestly I was." said Matilda.

Sally took all of that in and then smiled understandingly at Matilda.

"I understand." said Sally "I shouldn't have walked up behind you really, I should have caught your attention first. Still, it's all water under the bridge now, no harm's been done. So, how are you two this morning?" she added sweetly.

"We are quite well thank you honoured Queen of New Mobotropolis." said Bladefeather with a bow "Your questioning on our welfare is much appreciated."

"You're welcome." said Sally with a giggle "I have to say Bladefeather, your etiquette is very admirable. I quite like your eloquent manner of speech too, it's quite cute really."

"Oh…thank you." said Bladefeather bashfully. No one had ever commented positively on his manner of speech before…except Matilda. "Although my pleasant behaviour is mostly thanks to Matilda being an exemplary figure to me so you can thank her for my "admirable" etiquette."

"Aw, you're welcome cutie." said Matilda, kissing Bladefeather on

the cheek in appreciation.

Bladefeather smiled at that kiss he'd received from his gorgeous fiancée. No wonder he'd asked to marry Matilda, she was so lovely to him. Sally awed at this too.

"You know…I forgot to congratulate you two on your proposal." said Sally "I was with Emperor Tai when you proposed apparently Bladefeather so I missed it. Congratulations on becoming engaged and may you have a lovely wedding when it comes."

"Thank you very much." said Matilda, beaming happily "We'll invite Sonic and all of his friends to it when the happy day arrives next July."

"I'm sure everybody's looking forward to that." said Sally "So Matilda…where were we on that story of yours?" she asked innocently, hoping Matilda had remembered.

"Story?" echoed Bladefeather.

"Yes, Sally asked how I become a kung-fu warrior and so I decided to tell her my origins." explained Matilda "So far, we're right after mother's death. Now we're on one of the most shameful parts of my life…" she said, her grim expression suggesting she wasn't looking forward to telling this story.

"I'd very much like to hear this as well." said Bladefeather inquisitively "I too harbour interest in learning how you came to learn kung-fu. I'm astounded you haven't apprised me on that story yet."

"Well you never asked cheeky boy." giggled Matilda, tapping Bladefeather playfully on the beak "OK then, please sit down you two and I shall begin."

Sally and Bladefeather sat down, cross-legged, on the grass like a pair of eager children who were just about to get a story told to them. Matilda sat down, cross-legged, on the grass and she prepared to begin.

"After my mother died, the family was in despair." explained Matilda "I wouldn't stop wailing away and dad could barely even stay

standing. He spent a lot of his time shut away in his bedroom and wallowing in his sorrows. A week later though, dad decided to do something that would change my life forever. He went to the one man who became my master for help. And that master…was Master Kai Zen. Dad talked to him and told him that mother wanted me to learn kung-fu and he was all too happy to teach me. Unfortunately, my reaction was less than enthusiastic. I remember it as if it was yesterday…"

Chun-Nan, Master Kai's lair, 17 years ago…

"Daddy, why are we going down into a dark cave?" asked the curious Princess Matilda "I thought you didn't like it when it's dark."

"I've told you Matilda, the man we are meeting today lives down here and he'd love to meet you." said Tai, taking his daughter carefully by the hand and leading her down the stony steps that led into an underground hideout.

"Oh that's nice, I wonder who we'll be meeting?" Matilda wondered inquisitively.

A week had passed since the tragic death of Empress Tiana and Emperor Tai had decided to fulfil the wishes of his deceased wife… to teach Matilda kung-fu. Tiana had wanted Matilda to learn kung-fu so she could protect the family like she had done when she was alive and now she was dead, Tiana's wish needed to come true whether Matilda liked it or not. But since Tai had crippling arthritis in his back and thus, had been physically incapable of learning kung-fu throughout his life, he didn't know the first thing about kung-fu so he couldn't teach Matilda. So Tai had gone to a vigilante kung-fu master named Kai Zen, a Mobian badger who was very secretive and often dressed in dark robes and a mask to hide himself. He never revealed what he looked like underneath his mask and when he did, he went under a different name and different clothes so that nobody would ever know it was him roaming the village of Chun-Nan and thus, villains would have a hard time tracking him down. Tai had told Kai everything, including Tiana's wish for her daughter to be a kung-fu warrior, and Kai was all too happy to mentor the princess.

He had told Tai to bring Matilda to him so they could meet and that's where we are now. Tai had told Matilda next to nothing about what was going on, just that they were meeting somebody and Matilda was getting excited. She was excited on who they were meeting since she was a very sociable child and loved to meet new people. She began to wonder why on Mobius they were going underground though. Matilda maybe young but even she could get suspicious about something. Tai led Matilda all the way down the stone steps, passing lit fire torches on the walls as they did so, and they came to a wooden door that looked very old fashioned. Tai knocked on it politely.

"Enter." came Kai's raspy voice from the other side of the door.

Tai obliged and he opened the door. He let himself and Matilda inside and the two mongooses found themselves walking into a dimly lit room with lots of fire torches on the walls and some candles on candle sticks strategically placed around the room. There was a lovely looking carpet that had a nice pattern on it on the floor, ribbons were weaved around the ceiling and beanbag cushions were placed near the wall at the end of the room with a table in front of them. Master Kai was sitting on a beanbag and sipping some proper Chinese tea from a cup. He lifted his mask up so he could sip his tea and he put the cup back down on the table, lowering his mask as he did this. Tai walked up to Kai with Matilda trailing behind him nervously. Kai looked a bit scary to her with his mask on and as they got nearer and nearer to him, he just looked more and more scary. Tai knelt down at the table and bowed to Kai. Matilda knelt beside Tai and bowed to Kai, just going with what her father was doing. She had a feeling her dad knew what he was doing and that this stranger obviously meant no harm, even if he did look scary to her. Tai looked back up at Kai and he spoke to him.

"Greetings Master Kai Zen." said Tai politely.

"Greetings to you too fellow emperor." replied Kai "It is an honour to have you in my little home. And is this little girl the lovely princess you've been telling me about?" he asked, looking at Matilda and doing his best to sound friendly.

Matilda looked at Kai nervously, shaking a little and unable to speak

due to how frightened she was. Tai looked sadly at Matilda and he stroked her head to soothe her a little.

"Yes, this is Princess Matilda." explained Kai "Mine and Tiana's pride and joy and the one thing I love just as much as Tiana. Forgive her, she seems to be a little bit shy at the moment."

"I understand, many children have grown nervous around me given the mask I wear." said Kai gently "It is very lovely to meet you Princess Matilda." he said, leaning over the table and holding a hand out "The daughter of the emperor is a most honourable visitor indeed."

Matilda didn't say anything.

"Don't be shy sweetheart, say hello to this kind gentleman." said Tai softly, urging Matilda a little by patting her on the back.

"H-h-h-hello." burbled Matilda, taking Kai's hand with a trembling hand and shaking it "I-I-I-It's nice t-t-to meet-ed you."

"Indeed it is." said Kai "So emperor, is she here to begin her first session of kung-fu then?" he asked the emperor.

"Yes." said Tai.

"Wh-what?" said Matilda, looking up at her father curiously "Daddy, what did you say?"

"Matilda, it's time I told you why you've been brought here to meet this man." explained Tai, his face contorting with worry "You see… Kai is a kung-fu master and he is going to teach you the art of kung-fu."

"WHAT?!" squeaked Matilda "Daddy I hate violent thingies like this "kung-foo" thingy that mommy does! How could you do this to me?!"

"Matilda darling, clam down, I can explain…" said Tai hastily.

"I won't do it! I won't do it! You can't make me do it!" ranted Matilda, bouncing up and down furiously like a wild child.

"You will do as you are told young lady or you'll be in big trouble." said Tai sternly, pointing a finger at the angry mongoose "Now be a good girl and do what Master Kai says please. You'll grow to love kung-fu once you try it."

Matilda just folded her arms and pouted at her father. Kai shook his head disappointedly at the young mongoose and he glared at Tai.

"You should have warned me that the child has a hatred of violence." he said coldly.

"I know, I'm sorry I didn't but I'm sure you can convince the little angel that kung-fu isn't bad." said Tai "I'll just leave her in your care now. Matilda, be a good girl and I'll see you later."

He kissed his daughter on the head, the daughter herself still pouting and not even noticing the kiss her father planted on her head. Tai then left the room as quickly as he could, leaving Matilda all alone with Master Kai. Kai stood up from the table and he strode out to the carpet that lay on the floor just inches away from the table. Matilda kept her back turned on Kai and refused to move from the beanbag she was sitting on. Kai put his hands behind his back and cleared his throat.

"Little princess, would you kindly turn around and face me?" he asked politely.

Matilda did not move. From behind Kai's mask, one could see a small frown curling on the badger's face. He was not used to his students ignoring him after all.

"Matilda, please turn around and face me. " said Kai, his voice a little sharper.

Matilda still did not move.

"Matilda, in kung-fu it is compulsory for the student to obey the teacher. Now, turn around and face me please." ordered Kai.

Matilda did turn around eventually…and rudely blew a raspberry at him. She still had that pouting look on her face and her arms were still folded. Kai was shocked to receive such a response, especially

from a child of royalty. Surely the emperor raised her better than this! If Matilda was going to behave like this then Chun-Nan was a lost cause. Kai shook off the raspberry blowing and he cleared his throat again.

"Thank you." he said stiffly "Now then, since you are a young little girl we shall start off with the basic training. The battle stance is one place to start. Stand up please."

Matilda just sat where she was and didn't move, her eyes fixed on Kai and glaring at him. Kai put his hands on his hips furiously.

"I would very much like it if you would do as instructed please." he said "Students don't ignore their teacher. Now, stand up."

"Blah, blah, blah, blah!" blubbered Matilda mockingly.

Kai very nearly blew a vessel over that.

"Attitudes like that will not be tolerated here dear Matilda." he said sternly "But they can be overlooked if you behave yourself for the rest of the lesson. Now stand up."

"No!" snapped Matilda "I won't learn kung-foo and you can't make me! Violence is mean and I won't learn violent thingies like that!"

Kai's response was a death glare that would be visible to Matilda if he wasn't wearing a mask. His fists shook angrily but he clamed himself down and put his hands behind his back.

"Very well, a student who's reluctant to learn is not deserving of being my student." he said coldly "Matilda, if you won't do as you are told then I'm afraid I will have to take you home."

"Good! I don't wanna be in this horrible, dark place with a horrible, scary man like you!" shouted Matilda.

Amazing to think how a five-year old girl could test a kung-fu master's patience so much. Kai took Matilda firmly by the hand and he yanked her onto her feet. He then proceeded to take Matilda out of the lair and head off to the Pagoda of Prosperity. Boy was Tai going to be furious when he heard the news…

Right at this moment, Emperor Tai was sitting in a beanbag cushion and reading an old scroll that he had bought at an antique shop the other day. His reading was soon interrupted by the sound of someone knocking on the door though. Tai put the scroll down and he stood up from the beanbag. He walked over to the door and slid it open. To his horror, it was Master Kai standing there with Matilda by his side and looking grouchy. Kai's expression was impossible to read thanks to the mask he wore but his body language didn't suggest he was too happy. Tai's heart sank, he had a nasty feeling he knew what was coming. He gulped and then said.

"Why hello Master Kai. Is something wrong?" he asked.

"If my daughter was as ignorant and rude as yours, I would be ashamed to call myself a parent." said Kai, his voice like ice "Matilda refuses to listen to me and she's very rude to me, even citing me as "horrible and scary" for unprovoked reasons."

"Oh really?" said Tai, shocked to hear all of this "Oh Kai, I'm so terribly sorry about all this. She's as good as gold usually, honest she is…"

"Then maybe you've sent me the wrong Matilda." snapped Kai crossly "Never in my life have I had a student be so rude and ignorant towards me and it certainly won't be tolerated. Do not bring that brat back to me until you can teach her how to behave herself. Empress Tiana certainly would be ashamed to see this if she was still alive…"he added, glaring at Matilda in hopes of making her feel guilty over all this.

Alas, Matilda was still fuming and refusing to even so much as look at Kai. Tai sighed sadly and he took Matilda into the pagoda.

"I'm so sorry Master Kai, I promise that Matilda will behave herself next time. I give you my word of honour." he said desperately.

"Do not make a word of honour that isn't certain to be kept." warned Kai icily.

With that said, the badger turned his back on the emperor and stormed off, leaving him to deal with the troubled Matilda. Tai closed the door and he glared at Matilda furiously. Matilda didn't seem bothered by her father's angry face though.

"Dalon Matilda! I thought I told you to be a good girl and do as Master Kai told you!" Tai said crossly "Why were you rude and disrespectful to him?! You know better than to act like that Matilda!"

"I'm not learning kung-foo and that stupid man in the scary mask can't make me!" snapped Matilda cheekily "Violence is bad! You and mommy told me so yourselves!"

"Violence IS bad Matilda but it can be used for good too!" retorted Tai "Your mother used her kung-fu abilities to keep us safe and defend us from harm! I only wish for you to be able to do the same Matilda!"

"Well you can't make me do something I don't wanna!" yelled Matilda, angry tears forming in her eyes "It was very mean of you to try and make me do something I don't wanna do daddy and I won't do it!"

"Matilda…you dishonour me!" growled Tai furiously "You dishonour me…and you dishonour your mother too! By defying your teacher and humiliating me you have brought dishonour over the entire household! Is this what you want to do instead?!"

Matilda took in Emperor Tai's words and she suddenly began to realize something. She was doing something really bad. She didn't want to be doing something bad, especially if it meant dishonouring her family. On the other hand though, she still didn't want to learn something she didn't want to learn.

"Daddy…I don't mean to dishonour you." she said guiltily "But I still don't wanna learn kung-foo. Violence is bad, violence is what got mommy killed. I won't learn kung-foo and you can't make me!" her eyes began streaming with angry tears.

"Go to your room!" shouted Tai furiously "And don't come out until you can change that disgusting attitude of yours!"

Matilda gasped in fright as Tai shouted at her and she ran off to her room, crying her heart out as she ran into her room. As Matilda sobbed and closed the door behind her, Tai's expression died down into a sorrow, guilty expression. He began to feel guilty over being so angry towards Matilda and he began to worry if he'd been too hard on her. He began to wonder if Matilda would stop loving him after this. He decided that he'd see Matilda again at dinner time. Hopefully she'd be a little calmer and more respectful…and maybe Tai should tell Matilda why he signed Matilda up to learn kung-fu in the first place. Maybe that would change her mind…

A few hours later…

Matilda had done nothing accept lie on her bed and wail into her pillow and soak it with her tears since she'd been sent to her room, which had the curtains drawn to make the room dark, in disgrace. She hated being in trouble much more than she hated violence and because of how angry and callous Tai had been towards her, she began to feel ashamed and unloved. She began to think that Tai no longer loved her after all of this. This day was the second worst day of her life, second only to the death of her mother. Matilda began wishing that Tiana was still alive for she longed for her loving, motherly hugs to soothe her and dry away her tears. She really wanted to see her mother again but because Tiana was dead, this was not possible and that just made Matilda even more upset. She was so upset that she didn't even realize that she was hungry right now. When you're upset, you forget about things like that easily. Tai however had dinner prepared already and he had decided to come in and see Matilda. He opened Matilda's bedroom door slightly and he poked his head inside.

"Matilda dearest, dinner's ready." he said softly.

"Go away!" wailed Matilda.

Tai was not going to take that for an answer so he ignored Matilda. He let himself inside and closed the door behind himself.

"Come on Matilda, please don't be like that." said Tai worriedly "I'm

just here to say dinner's ready. I've made your favourite dish, wantons and curry sauce…"

"I said go away!" screamed Matilda, throwing her pillow at Tai "Go away, go away, go away!"

The pillow smacked Tai in the face and then came down with a soft thud on the floor. Tai picked up the pillow and he strode over to Matilda's bed, the poor child still crying into her arms.

"Matilda please, I'm just trying to make things better for you." said Tai "And besides, you can't miss your meals, you won't grow up big and strong if you don't eat…"

"Leave me alone!" raged Matilda, standing up on the bed and practically screaming her head off "I don't wanna see you daddy! Get lost!"

She then tried to punch her father on the arm! Tai however held the pillow up in front of himself and let the pillow take all the punishment for him. Matilda began to punch the pillow as hard as she could, grunting loudly as she punched it. She was trying very hard to make her punches hurt but the pillow was so thick and soft that Tai didn't feel the punches all that much, just the pillow being punched. Matilda was in such a blind rage that she didn't really care that she was punching the pillow instead of Tai. Tai let Matilda vent out all her anger on the pillow and finally, Matilda stopped punching the pillow and instead, she kneeled down beside her father and clutched his arm, sobbing loudly and staining his robe with her tears. It seemed that punching the pillow did her some good for Matilda suddenly had a change of heart.

"Oh daddy! I'm so sorry!" she whimpered, sobbing her heart out over all of this "I've been a very, very bad girl I have! I'm a bad daughter and I'm a disgrace to you and the family!"

"Matilda, you're not a bad daughter or a disgrace to the family at all." said Tai, hugging Matilda sympathetically "You're just angry at the fact you're being made to do something you don't want to do. I'm the one who should be sorry, I shouldn't have forced this upon you. I should have talked to you about it first. This is all my fault this is."

"No it isn't." sobbed Matilda "Daddies are never at fault."

"That's not true precious." said Tai, stroking Matilda's hair gently and making Matilda feel a little better "Anybody can be at fault, me being your father doesn't make me any different."

"Sniff…really?" said Matilda, wiping her runny nose on her arm.

"Really." said Tai "This whole thing is my fault Matilda. I shouldn't have forced this upon you, I should have made you fully aware and I should have told you why I signed you up for kung-fu lessons in the first place. I'm so sorry Matilda, I shouldn't have made you so angry."

Matilda hugged her father ever tighter.

"Oh daddy! I forgive you!" she said, still crying "I'm sorry I didn't do as I was told and made YOU angry! I hope you don't hate-ed me for being such a naughty little girl."

"Matilda dear, I could NEVER hate you." said Tai softly "You are my most precious little treasure in all the world. You bring joy to me every day and I could NEVER hate you. I love you Matilda, I always have done and I always will do."

"Really?" sniffed Matilda, wiping her eyes dry.

"Of course." said Tai "Please Matilda…I mean every word I say to you. I'm speaking from my very heart. You may have been a bad girl Matilda but that is not enough to stop me loving you. It's because I love you as to why I'm trying to make you better."

Matilda smiled at her father.

"Aw that's nice…I love you too daddy." said Matilda, hugging him happily "You're the most wonderful daddy in the world you are."

"I'm your only daddy Matilda." chuckled Tai "Now then…it's time I properly explained the situation. Do you know why I signed you up for kung-fu lessons?"

"Why?" asked Matilda curiously.

"I did it because…it's what your mother wanted." said Tai gently, stroking Matilda's cheek softly.

Matilda gasped in surprise.

"Mommy wanted me to learn kung-foo?" she said in disbelief.

"She did indeed." said Tai "Mother wanted you to learn kung-fu and become a strong warrior just like she did. She knew that she wouldn't be around forever and thus, she wanted you to follow her footsteps and learn kung-fu like she did. That way you could protect the family like she did and you would bring honour to not just the family…but the whole country. I can't protect us unfortunately, I'm a weak, frail person. My arthritis stops me from being able to learn kung-fu because it's too painful for me. You however would be perfectly OK to learn kung-fu Matilda, you have no problems with your body so now Tiana's dead, you're the next best person to protect the family. I know we've said that violence is bad but violence can be used for good too. You would be taught how to use violence for good if you took the lessons Matilda and you would be an honourable warrior. So Matilda…will you respect your mother's wishes and become like her?"

This was a big decision for a girl so young to make. Matilda stopped hugging Tai and he fought to herself. As much as she hated violence…she loved her father very much and didn't want to lose him like she lost her mother. If she took the lessons then she could keep her father safe and bring great honour to the family. It is often said that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. The emperor was adored by many and Matilda's hatred of violence was the few so wouldn't it be selfish of her to not take kung-fu lessons and thus, leave the family unprotected? True there were kung-fu warriors to defend them but you can't rely on others all the time. You need to be able to take care of yourself as well. Not to mention, if her mother wanted her to learn kung-fu them she was going to learn it just for her. Matilda may not enjoy it but she'd give anything to honour her father and keep him safe. Matilda looked back at Tai and she smiled sweetly at him.

"I'll do it." she said "I'll take-ed the kung-foo lessons, just for you and mommy."

"That's my little girl!" cried Tai happily, hugging Matilda with glee and making her giggle "I knew you'd understand in the end! So what are you going to do tomorrow then?"

"Go back to Master Kai's home and apolojizz…apolojizz…uh…say sorry to him and then I'll do what he tells me to do. I'll become as strong as mommy and I'll protect you from nasty people like those moles who killed mommy."

"That's what I like to hear." said Tai "I'm sorry I didn't explain all this sooner, I could have saved you a lot of trouble."

"It's OK daddy, I'm sorry I acted very mean and rude." said Matilda "I won't do it again."

"Very good Matilda." said Tai, kissing his daughter on the forehead.

Then suddenly a rumbling growl emitted from nowhere and made both mongooses jump. Matilda clutched her tummy and giggled.

"Oh…my tummy's talking to me. " she laughed "It must be dinner time."

"It is indeed precious." said Tai "I do hope dinner hasn't gotten too cold while we've been talking."

"Doesn't matter. I'll eat it cold." giggled Matilda.

So with that said, Tai and Matilda left the bedroom and they sat down to the table to eat their dinner. Luckily for them, the wantons hadn't gotten too cold so they still tasted nice. As they ate away, Matilda began to wonder what was going to happen tomorrow. She was also hoping that Kai would forgive her for her rudeness today…

The next day, Tai took Matilda to Kai's underground lair and he urged Matilda to go inside alone. The idea was to show how brave she was, to go in an apologize to Kai without needing him at her side. Tai however did watch from behind the door, opening it a crack so he could see Matilda nervously walk up to Kai, who was sitting behind his table and writing on a piece of paper. Kai hardly seemed

to notice Matilda for he was so busy writing. Matilda came up to the table and she cleared her throat.

"Excuse… me. " she squeaked nervously.

Kai raised his head and he was rather surprised to see Matilda standing there before him and looking very worried. Kai put down the feather quill he was writing with and he clasped his hands together. His eyes narrowed from behind his mask. Matilda began to feel scared. Was Kai going to get cross with her?

"Well look who's back." he said coldly "Has the princess come to insult me and be rude to me again?"

"N-n-n-no s-s-sir." said Matilda, gulping "I-I-I-I'M h-h-h-here t-t-t-to s-s-say something t-t-to you."

Kai raised an eyebrow in astonishment. Was this the same little girl who had been rude to him yesterday? Or had Tai just sent him a new Princess Matilda? Either way, he was interested in seeing where this went so he let Matilda conduct herself.

"Very well, what do you wish to say then?" asked Kai cautiously.

Matilda gulped again and put her hands behind her back in worry. Her head had beads of sweat running down it.

"I'm…gulp…I'm really sorry for my behaviour yesterday sir." she said quietly "Please forgive me. I've come here to take the lessons daddy signed me up for and I promise I'll be a good girl."

Kai was rather surprised to hear this coming from Matilda, considering the example she'd set for him yesterday. He seriously began to doubt that this was the same princess that had been rude to him. Tai must have brought somebody else in…or at the most managed to get Matilda to come to her senses. Kai stood up from the table and looked down at Matilda, the mongoose worried over what he was going to say to her.

"Much better." said Kai brightly "That is the kind of attitude I expect from a new student. So what made you change your mind then?"

"Well daddy told me that mommy wanted me to learn kung-foo so to honour mommy's wishes, I'm gonna do it. That way I can keep daddy safe…and stop any nasty men from attacking him like mommy did." said Matilda.

"I see…" said Kai "Tai told me that was the reason he was signing you up too. I would have explained it to you had I not gotten so cross with you and let my mind falter. I apologize for not telling you this in the first place, but it was probably better coming out of your father instead of me anyway."

"Um…OK." said Matilda, not fully understanding what Kai had said "So…what's my first lesson master?"

"Your first lesson shall be the fighting stance." explained Kai "Now then, try and copy the pose I make…"

Kai bent his legs and had one foot forward and the other behind him. He raised one arm and he held the other arm straight outwards. Matilda looked at Kai and tried to copy him. She couldn't quite get it though and she lost her balance and fell over. Kai helped her up and allowed her to try again. As the lesson began, Tai closed the door behind him and left the two in peace. At last, Matilda was going to learn kung-fu. And she was going to be a woman like no over as the lessons progressed and time went by…

Present Day…

"…and from then on my life changed forever." concluded Matilda "I became the woman I am now, I learned to embrace the sport of kung-fu and set aside my petty hatred of violence for all the good I use it for and I brought the greatest honour anyone could bestow to me…my father's smile and my mother's happy spirit."

"Aww, that was a lovely story Matilda." said Sally, clearly enjoying the whole thing.

"A most interesting listen to indeed my love." said Bladefeather "It never would have crossed my sharp little mind though that your

behaviour over discovering you had to learn kung-fu was so… abysmal."

"I'll say, you sounded like a real brat at that time, no offence." said Sally.

"None taken." said Matilda with a sigh "I look back on that day with shame. Shame in the sense that I was so immature about discovering I was being signed up to learn kung-fu. I can't believe I acted like that, that was so disgraceful of me. The biggest wound I received on my heart that day was being told I had dishonoured daddy and also mother. Nothing hurts me more than being told those horrible words." she added, hugging herself.

"No need to worry though Matilda, those words will not emit from anyone's lips ever again for you bring great honour to us all." said Bladefeather, putting his arms around Matilda and resting his chin on her shoulder "If the empress was alive now…I bet she'd feel more honoured than anyone that you followed in her footsteps and became the warrior she used to be."

"I bet she would." said Matilda with a smile "The only thing is…I became more than mother used to be. She had only trained to the master stage. I've gone onto the expert stage. I'm still not quite there yet though since I have to master inner peace but still."

"I believe that you shall master inner peace sometime soon my gorgeous little daisy." purred Bladefeather "You've come this far, you can still make it I know you will."

"Aww…thanks handsome." said Matilda appreciatively.

"Anytime precious." said Bladefeather, kissing the beautiful princess on the cheek.

Matilda giggled and she kissed him back. Sally watched this moment with a loving sigh.

"Aww…you two are wonderful couple." said Sally with awe "You seem so happy together, I bet married life will be a joy to you two."

"You bet it will." said Matilda happily "I can hardly wait for our

wedding day."

"Even I can barely curb my excited nerves for that magnanimous day too." said Bladefeather gleefully "I can already envision what I shall be wearing that day…" he added with a wink.

"I bet you'll look very smart." complimented Sally "So Matilda if it's no trouble…what was it like learning kung-fu? And when did you first get to use your skills?"

"That story will have to wait." said Matilda "I've got my morning exercises to finish. If you want…you could maybe train with me. Let's see what skills you have. That is, if you don't mind."

"Of course I don't mind." said Sally brightly "I can show you how good with a staff I am too for I have one of my own."

She then took the staff out of her vest pocket and she deployed it to full length, complete with the blade at the end. Matilda and Sally stood up and they prepared to have a little stick fight. Bladefeather sat by, eagerly waiting to see how this would turn out. He was especially interested in seeing what Sally could do. And once the fight was over, Matilda would have more stories to tell. He was looking forward to this definitely…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 152***

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 154***

Well that's it for this part. I apologize if it was dull and boring but hey, not every story can have action in it you know. Did you like it? Join in next time for we get a glimpse of Matilda's "First Mission"...

Reviews will be appreciated thank you.

Rise of a Warrior Princess 3

Arc 19: Rise of a Warrior Princess

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 154-155

Part 3: The First Mission

"OK Sally, position ready…" said Princess Matilda as she bent down into a battle ready stance and rose the naginata above her head, ready to fight "Weapon raised…"

Queen Sally Acorn copied Matilda. She bent down into a battle ready stance, rose her staff (which also had a blade on it) above her head and prepared to do battle. After hearing the story of how Matilda came to learn kung-fu, Sally had decided to do some training with Matilda for the princess was having her morning exercises and Sally was invited to join in a little. The two were about to have a friendly stick fight. Bladefeather the Falcon, Matilda's fiancé was watching with interest. Not only were two pretty girls going to have a friendly stick fight but he'd get a taster of what Sally was like. He always liked to see how other people fought, especially if he got to put in any advice. He did like to help others improve on their skills too. As Matilda and Sally prepared to fight, Matilda gave off a piece of advice.

"When fighting with the staff, the greatest advantage is obviously length. You can hit your opponent without needing to get too close." she said "You can also use it for jumps and to attack people from behind being as a weapon this long can reach out behind just nicely. I suppose you know what disadvantages the staff has?" she asked.

"I do but I know how to avoid them." said Sally "I've been practicing quite vigorously on how to use a staff."

"Let's see how well you perform then." said Matilda in the manner of a kung-fu master teaching a student "Let's begin!"

Sally twirled the staff around and she ran towards Matilda. Matilda used her naginata to pole vault up into the air and hurl over Sally. She landed behind Sally and butted her in the back with the blunt end of the naginata. Sally winced as her back was sharply prodded and she fell over onto her hands and knees. Sally was about to get up until Matilda poked her in the back with the naginata's blade. Sally froze and remained still as she felt the cold steel of the sharp blade pressing against her back.

"The advantage of a bladed staff of course is the more threat it poses." explained Matilda "Anyone will hesitate to move once a staff's blade is poking them in the back."

"I know…but I've got a counter attack." crowed Sally.

She threw herself flat onto her stomach and rolled out of the way of Matilda's naginata. Matilda gasped in astonishment over such a move. Sally clearly had more skill then she had anticipated. She'd not seen many people avoid a blade to the back like that. Sally jumped onto her feet and she swung her staff at Matilda. Matilda ducked and she held her naginata up to block Sally's attack. Sally withdrew her staff and she aimed the flat end of the staff at Matilda foot. Matilda blocked the attack and manoeuvred her staff in a way that the blade ended up pointing at Sally's face. Sally gulped and she thrust her arms up, moving the blade up form her face and giving her the perfect opportunity to knee Matilda in the gut. Matilda doubled over and Sally tried to whack her with her staff but Matilda blocked the attack yet again. She straightened back up and withdrew her naginata. She twirled it around and swung it at Sally. Sally ducked but Matilda then whacked her in the legs with the naginata. It was a tactic she'd developed herself, swing on the top and strike at the bottom (that's what she sees it as). Sally nearly fell over but she managed to stay standing. Matilda however thrust the blunt end of the naginata forward and hit Sally squarely in the gut. Sally spluttered loudly over that sharp prod and she doubled over, clutching her gut in pain. Matilda tutted at her.

"You need to be a lot more tolerant of pain Sally, that won't do you any good on the battlefield." she sneered.

"Thanks for the tip!" muttered Sally through gritted teeth, fighting the

aching pain in her belly.

Matilda just launched another attack. She smacked Sally in the shoulder with her naginata, making Sally grimace and then retaliate with a swipe to the torso. She managed to hit Matilda before the princess could make a move. Matilda fought the pain in her side long enough to lash out and kick Sally in the shin. Sally cried out as she was kicked and then Matilda lashed out and grabbed Sally's staff. Throwing her own onto the ground, she wrestled with Sally for the staff. Sally tried her hardest not to let Matilda snatch the staff off of her but Matilda was much too strong for somebody like Sally. Matilda had been training vigorously for YEARS, Sally had only recently been taking such training in fighting. She hadn't been learning to fight anywhere near as long as Matilda had so Sally was going to be weaker than Matilda. Matilda yanked the staff out of Sally's hands and she ran around behind Sally. She held the staff under Sally's throat and began throttling her, pressing the staff sharply against Sally's throat and making her gag. Sally gripped the staff and tried to pull it out from under her neck but Matilda pressed on.

"Ack! Gack! Matilda…ack…let me go!" gagged Sally.

"Nah ah, a warrior doesn't beg for the opponent to let him or her go." said Matilda smoothly "If you want me to let you go you either surrender or try to break free. Choice is yours."

"Ack…ok then…gack!" grunted Sally as she still tried to break free "I'll…make you let go of me!"

Sally squirmed and struggled in Matilda's grasp but try as she might, she couldn't get the staff away from her throat. Matilda pressed on harder and harder as Sally tried to get away. Matilda was pressing on so hard that Sally could hardly breathe. To make matters worse, Matilda forced Sally down onto her knees so it was even harder to break free from her grasp. Sally knew when she was beaten so she forcibly decided to surrender.

"Ack…OK, OK! Gack…I give, I give just please let me go!" choked Sally "I can't breathe!"

Matilda let Sally go. Sally gasped and panted heavily for breath and she rubbed her throat quite furiously to ease the pain in it. The whole thing had left her throat feeling very funny indeed, almost like she'd been choking on something. Matilda threw down Sally's staff and shook her head gravely.

"This won't do at all Sally." she sighed "A real warrior never quits. A real warrior would have found a way out of that situation instead of quitting like that. If you surrender, your enemy will not let you go, he'll just finish you off right there."

"But a real warrior wouldn't get into that kind of situation in the first place!" croaked Sally furiously, still rubbing her throat.

"True but even a real warrior can get into a tough situation." noted Matilda "Even I'm not immune to getting caught and trapped. During the Five Festivals of Holy Honour last year I was chained up in a dungeon and instead of quitting, I found a way out of that situation. Although I've gotten into situations I couldn't get out of before, mainly when I was caught by the Spiders of Anarchy and when Conquering Storm imprisoned me…" she added, thinking back to those times.

"I see." said Sally "Well thanks for the advice Matilda, I'll remember it for the future."

"That's what I like to hear." said Matilda brightly "Nothing makes a wise person happier than someone who follows his or her advice. At least, that's how Master Kai put it…"

"Indeed, and I agree with him." said Bladefeather "It's always nice when the student follows the advice of his or her master. Means the master is teaching them well and that he is not simply wasting his valuable time."

"Indeed." agreed Matilda "So Sally, allow me to demonstrate how you would break out of the position I had you in. Bladefeather, do what I did to Sally." she ordered.

"Oh…OK." said Bladefeather unsurely "I hope I don't hurt that lovely neck of yours my dear."

"Bladefeather honey, I'm used to pain by now." sighed Matilda "Don't worry about me. Now do as I asked please."

Bladefeather obeyed and he took the naginata from Matilda. He then stepped behind his fiancée and he held the staff in front of Matilda. He pressed it against her throat and pinned her to his body. Matilda gripped the staff and tried to break free but she couldn't for Bladefeather was pressing on quite hard. Sally watched, wondering how Matilda would get out of this one. It didn't seem like she could for the moment. Bladefeather sort of grinned to himself, pleased to think that he'd managed to subdue Matilda for once.

"How are you gonna break free?" asked Sally.

"Anyway…I like!" croaked Matilda "For example…"

She then turned her head and kissed Bladefeather directly on the beak much to the falcon's shock! Bladefeather was so surprised and entranced by the kiss that he lost focus and loosened his grip on Matilda. This gave Matilda the ample opportunity to break free of Bladefeather's grip, snatch the naginata from him and then kick out backwards, sending him hurling across the grass and onto his back. Bladefeather grumbled to himself and he sat up, rubbing himself better.

"Bamboozled by a kiss! How humiliating!" he groaned.

"Least this wasn't for real Bladefeather." giggled Matilda "On the battlefield, I'd be more likely to bite the person who's got me or even use other methods like head-butting, kicking them in the legs, elbowing and any method I can think of. Throwing the enemy off can help you break free when they grab hold of you. Remember this Sally, it may save your neck out in battle someday."

"I will, thank you Matilda." said Sally happily.

"It was my utmost pleasure Sally." beamed Matilda, shaking Sally's hand with pleasure.

Bladefeather smiled at the two women happily.

"Nice to see two royals from two different countries getting along

nicely." he said "Makes me happy the emperor agreed to ally the Kingdom of Chun-Nan with the Kingdom of Acorn."

"I'm happy your emperor even accepted my offer." beamed Sally "The Royal Fighters Service will be even stronger with kung-fu warriors like you and Matilda helping us and since we're allied, we'll be in contact and always be able to help each other out. Allying with others only makes us stronger and soon we'll be unstoppable in our battle against Dr. Eggman and all other villains who threaten the peace and sanctuary of Mobius."

"I marvel at such a thought my honourable little queen." said Bladefeather brightly "I dream about a world where evil does not exist and good reigns supreme for all eternity."

"I long for a world like that too Bladefeather." said Matilda dreamily "But I guess we'll just have to keep dreaming for the time being. Right now as I promised, it's time to get on with my story. My exercises are done for the morning now."

"Most lovely indeed my little stream of water." said Bladefeather "I highly look forward to hearing what it was like learning kung-fu for you."

"Oh that's nice." said Sally "So where does this story begin?"

Matilda sat down on the grass, making sure she was sitting near the flower beds that Bladefeather had in this lovely garden of his (remember, this isn't Matilda's pagoda, this is Bladefeather's. Matilda's is still being repaired after it had been destroyed*) since she liked sitting near flowers. She loved flowers of any kind after all and sitting near flowers gave her a great comfort. Bladefeather sat beside the beautiful princess and Sally sat in front of her. They were all sitting with their legs crossed and their hands on their knees, a pretty nice position to sit in as it can be relaxing to many a person who sits like that. The moment everybody was sat down, Matilda began to speak.

"So after I signed up for kung-fu lessons, what came next was the most amazing 17 years of my life." explained Matilda "Learning kung-fu was a hard but amazing experience for me. I learnt lots of

new things and overcame so hard challenges. Sadly…it wasn't all fun and games though. I've had my fair share of bad memories of learning kung-fu…" she said sadly.

"Oh dear, what like?" asked Sally.

"Shameful moments." explained Matilda "And some of them varying in some ways. Being as I was a little girl for some of my training I, of course, did get into trouble a lot of times through mischievous or curious activity. One time I accidentally broke one of Kai's favourite vases while practicing a powerful punch. I lied about it and just ended up getting myself into big trouble. Kai punished me by making me do push-ups until I was exhausted." she said, cringing over the very memory.

"Oh my…" gasped Sally in astonishment.

"A most callous punishment I must say." said Bladefeather, shaking his head "Bit cacophonous though I must say, making you exhaust yourself just for lying about breaking something. Mine and Mushu's master never punished us so harshly."

"Well Kai often believed that a harsh punishment is good discipline and good discipline can shape up somebody very nicely." explained Matilda "If you're a bit too passive to the student, they can grow up they wrong way as he often thought."

"But being TOO harsh can make someone grow up the wrong way too." noted Bladefeather "Remember Zira the Ruthless? Her mother's horrible behaviour resulted in her becoming what she is now."

"I know…" sighed Matilda "I kinda feel sorry for Zira. She could have been an amazing woman if she'd been raised properly…"

"Who's Zira?" asked Sally curiously.

"She is a person not worth talking about. Suffice it to say, she's imprisoned now." said Matilda grimly "Anyway back to the story, Kai's punishments did help to shape me up into the woman I am now and I learned that if I didn't want to bear the wrath of his

punishments, I'd have to behave myself. It was much easier learning kung-fu then after I'd learnt that lesson. Kai never had to punish me again I was so good." she added with a smile that sadly, didn't stay on her face for very long and quickly left "But still, not everything was glorious for me during my years of learning kung-fu. Kai had other students come to him to learn kung-fu too and when I was seven, I ended up sharing lessons with four other students. One was a polecat, one was a dragonfly, one was a lizard and one was a ferret and they all ranged in size and strength. For no reason at all they all HATED me!" she cried out aloud quite suddenly "And I mean REALLY hated me!"

"Oh dear, why is that then?" asked Sally.

"I don't know, they just hated me the moment they so much as LOOKED at me!" blurted Matilda "And as the lessons went on they began to pick on me behind my master's back. They'd tug my hair, practice their new learned skills on me and trip me up a lot. I was left feeling sore from more than just training for a good few years. I never told on Kai because they threatened to kill me if I did and given I was young, weak and helpless back then, I obviously was too scared to defy them. When I reached the age of eleven they picked on me even more! They revealed why they hated me so much when I finally decided to ask them "Why do you keep picking on me?". They were jealous of me just because I was a princess. Seriously, that's their reason, because I'm a princess." she said, reinforcing the statement in case Sally and Bladefeather didn't believe her.

"They abhorred you just because you are a princess?" snorted Bladefeather "What flaccid-minded, ill-educated gamin! Why does your royal title make them hate you?"

"Because they thought that Kai would start giving ME all the attention and they didn't think that princesses should learn kung-fu." sighed Matilda "They were very biased towards the very idea of a princess learning kung-fu and also thought that I 'd get all the attention whereas Kai focused on all of us, not just me. When the students revealed their reasons for hating me I tried to make peace with them…and they just punched me. All four of them. I'd decided I'd had enough of being bullied by them so I fought back and beat

them all up. I prevailed thanks to my better skills and dedication to training. Kai came in wondering what was going on and the students of course blamed it all on me. Kai knew me too well though, he knew I was too mature and well-educated to attack somebody unprovoked. So he asked me to explain myself. Mustering up courage I never had before…I told on them. I even told Kai they threatened to kill me if I told on them. Kai was livid to hear this and he instantly kicked all four students out of his lair, leaving me as his only student. The students were so angry over this that they all lashed out and…tried to kill me as they promised. The lizard nearly killed me. He had me by the neck and was about to slit my throat with his claws but Kai simply knocked him and his buddies out with a nerve pinch each and they were thrown into the Lóng de dòngxué prison. Such a senseless waste of life and at such young ages too. They were only twelve, thirteen, thirteen and fourteen respectively. In Chun-Nan, you can get arrested for any murder attempt once you're over eleven."

"I see." said Sally "Well they deserved to be locked up. How could they be so horrible to you? And out of spite and jealousy too! Disgusting behaviour indeed!"

"Most abysmal I agree my dear." said Bladefeather, shaking his head "Those students do not deserve to learn kung-fu. Are they still incarcerated now Matilda?"

"Yes. All four of them." said Matilda "All sharing Zira's position, limbs infused in concrete and all. I'm glad they're there, they were horrible people and they do NOT have my sympathy. Hating me just because I'm a princess, how horrible! Once they were gone I had a wonderful time learning kung-fu. When I reached the age of sixteen, I was finally allowed to have my FIRST ever mission." she said, a tone of excitement in her voice.

"Really?" said Sally "It took you until sixteen to finally get a mission?"

"When you're a kung-fu student, you're forbidden any combat of any kind until you're sixteen." said Matilda "They consider sixteen to be the age where the body's at it's most mature and the best age to start going on missions at. Also you learn most of what you need to

learn by the time you reach that age. So would you like to hear my first mission?" she asked eagerly.

"I'd LOVE to hear that gorgeous." said Bladefeather with an excited grin on his face.

"Yes, please tell us Matilda." said Sally, looking like an excited child around a campfire who was eagerly awaiting the next bit of the story.

"OK then, it all started on the 5th of November…" began Matilda.

Chun-Nan: 6 years ago…

It is dawn in the beautiful country of Chun-Nan and right now, the sixteen year old Princess Matilda was in her master's lair and practicing her skills quite vigorously. As a sixteen year old, Matilda wore a dress that was a darker purple than the one she wore now and instead of golden flowers, this dress had red dragon patterns that weaved around the skirt section of the dress and up to her hips. She didn't wear a red belt but she did wear matching slippers for her dress like she does now. Her hair wasn't styled, it draped down behind her shoulders. It wasn't until Matilda reached the age of twenty when she started really styling her hair, especially in a bun. Matilda stood on the carpet that spread out on the floor and she breathed slowly, her hands together and her arms stretched out. Matilda then bent her knees, took a battle-ready stance and she threw a punch ahead of herself. She drew her arm back and threw another punch. She did this again for a couple of minutes, throwing punches until her arms felt sore and then she did something else. She twirled around and threw a kick as hard as she could. She then spun around as fast as she could and landed gracefully back down on her feet. She stood on her hands and straightened her legs in a magnificent handstand. She then jumped back onto her feet and landed perfectly, not wobbling in the slightest. Matilda threw some more punches and then she back flipped across the carpet. She landed on her feet and then lunged forward in a powerful punching attack. She took a moment to pause for breath and wipe sweat off her forehead and then she positioned herself at one end of the

carpet. She relaxed herself and then she jumped into the air in a graceful kick, her right leg stretched right out as she soared through the air. She landed on the other side of the carpet and on her feet without a single fault. Matilda stood up straight and flipped her hair back as it drapped over her face. She was very pleased with herself, seeing how well she'd progressed over the years and how good her skills were now. She may not have been too happy about learning kung-fu but it had been worth it, earning her father's smile and thinking about how much honour she was brining to the family now. And now she was sixteen, she'd soon get her first mission assignment. Of course, something would have to happen of course and Matilda was kinda hoping that things would stay peaceful. The peaceful life is what she longed for and she'd be all too happy for things to remain peaceful. As is, she still had to practice her skills for anything can happen and she'd need to be in tip-top shape for when anything bad suddenly happens. Matilda got down on her hands and she began to do push-ups at a great speed. She was so strong that she was able to do five push-ups in half a second. As she did her push-ups, Master Kai Zen walked in and observed his marvellous student. It filled him with great joy to see his students working hard and remaining so dedicated to their training. Pity Matilda was the only one who remained faithful and didn't get kicked out or anything but at least Matilda was better than nothing. If only his other students had been as good as her. Maybe Matilda would be an example to others and how they should learn kung-fu. Matilda finished doing her push-ups (She did fifty and only two minutes have passed) and she stood up. Her eyes caught sight of Master Kai and she bowed to him immediately.

"Ni hao master." she said.

"Ni hao to you too child." said Kai brightly "It's good to see you exercising like this. A kung-fu master never stops exercising after all."

"I know." said Matilda "So master, how's things going now?"

"I'm afraid I have grave news for you my dear." said Kai grimly "For the first time in 100 years...the Huns have invaded Chun-Nan and they're plotting to ransack the country."

Matilda looked puzzled and horrified at the same time.

"Oh no! Invaders?! Plotting to ransack the country?! That's terrible!" cried Matilda "But tell me...who are the Huns?"

"A band of mercenary huskies from outer regions who seek conquest and destruction." explained Kai "The Huns have attempted to conquer Chun-Nan for thousands upon thousands of years, their attempts always in vain, and now they're attacking again. I received word from my messenger Pi Du the Duck who just happened to spot them charging towards Chun-Nan like the savage dogs they are. They are on the outer regions of the country and will reach this village and your home by tomorrow...unless they can be stopped."

Matilda was horrified to hear this. The Huns were coming to her village and her home?! She had to stop them and fast! She couldn't let the Huns arrive or they'd ravage the village and maybe even attempt to kill her and her father! Matilda grabbed her master's robes.

"Please, oh please let me go and stop them master! Please, I'm all too happy to stop those Huns!" begged Matilda "Please, please, PLEASE let me stop them!"

Kai looked at his begging student and thought hard on this. Would Matilda be ready for this? Was it time to let her have her very first mission? This was the scariest moment of any kung-fu student's life, wondering if it was time to finally let them go and start defending the country. Kai decided to test Matilda and see if the princess was ready. He pulled out a glass from his robe and he balanced it on his fingertips.

"Let us test if you are ready child. Make me drop the glass and you will be given the mission." said Kai.

"Master please, we don't have time for this!" screeched Matilda "The Huns are coming! We need to act now!"

"Just do as you're told!" snapped Kai "A student does not second-guess his or her tasks!"

"But.." protested Matilda helplessly.

Kai shot a death glare at Matilda and he pointed menacingly at her. Matilda shut up and admitted defeat. She knew better than to question her master when he had that face on. She had to pass the test or she wouldn't be allowed to stop the Huns from reaching her village. Matilda put her arms beside her and she breathed in deeply. She let it out again and looked back at Kai.

"OK then, I'll do your test." she said quietly.

Kai stretched out his arm and held the glass firmly in his hand as if daring Matilda to come up to him and dare to snatch the glass from him. Of course though Matilda wasn't allowed to do that, she had to make Kai DROP the glass in order to pass the test. Matilda looked at the glass, wondering how on Mobius she could possibly make Kai drop it. She knew full well that Kai was too swift and clever for her. Matilda would have to use her brain for this one. Brains are better than brawn after all. Matilda slowly edged up to Kai, taking careful steps as she did so. Kai just stood there, the glass firmly clenched in his hand and eyeing Matilda's every step, wondering what the princess was going to try out here. Matilda had never been good at these kinds of tests so he didn't really suspect she'd fare to well out here. Little did Kai know is that Matilda had been training quite hard and had gotten pretty good now so the princess was likely to surprise him out here. Matilda edged up to Kai very slowly and she kept this up until she was about two feet in front of him. Then she did something strange. Matilda just stood there and kept her eyes fixed on the glass. She didn't make a move of any kind. She just stood there, completely motionless but focused. Kai kept his stance, wondering what Matilda was up to. Matilda seemed to be thinking about how to make Kai drop the glass. Matilda stood still for a few minutes and then she finally did something. She turned her back on Tai and looked like she was going to walk away. Kai seemed to think that was what Matilda was going to do. Matilda however raised her leg and instead of taking a step forward…she kicked out backwards! She hit Kai squarely in the leg and made Kai wince in pain. He bent down to rub his leg better and Matilda then lashed out and hit Kai's hand, causing him to drop the glass on the floor where it smashed to pieces. Kai shook his hand and rubbed it better, wincing at the

stinging pain in his hand. He looked at the smashed glass on the floor and he smiled at Matilda. The princess though seemed a little nervous.

"Oh Kai, did I hurt you too much?" asked Matilda worriedly.

"Matilda dear, I'm used to pain. All kung-fu masters are used to pain." Kai reassured "Anyway, very well done Matilda. You caught me off guard you did. Not many people get the drop on me."

"Oh thank you master." said Matilda, bowing to Master Kai respectfully "So…does this mean I've passed?"

"Indeed you have my glorious student." said Kai happily "You've passed the test. You have proven to me you have the brains and brawn a true kung-fu warrior needs to enter battle. You are ready to have your first mission my dear. You may go out and stop the Huns."

Matilda was speechless to hear this. Speechless with excitement that is. She was thrilled as all heck to hear this, she was going to be the one to go out and stop the Huns! She could hardly wait to go out and fight them now, she was so happy that she felt like darting out of the door without a moment's hesitance. Emperor Tai would be so happy to hear about all this right now. This is what Matilda had been training for all her life and now the day had come, she could go out and defend the country like a proper kung-fu warrior like her mother did. Matilda could hardly say anything more, she just hugged Kai gratefully.

"Oh thank you master! Thank you so much!" cried Matilda happily "But there's one thing…do you think I'll make it out alive? The Huns are a large group aren't they?"

"They're only a group of about sixty huskies." explained Kai "I'm sure someone of your skills will survive that many. The Huns don't know martial arts of any kind, just standard hand-to-hand combat. A kung-fu master like me, you or any other kung-fu master easily out skills all of them. Besides, it doesn't matter on how many enemies you fight…it's how skilful you are at fighting many enemies."

"I see." said Matilda "I've never really practiced much at fighting large groups though. I might get killed out there."

"If you rely more on your agility and brains Matilda, you will survive." said Kai kindly, putting his hands on the princess's shoulders "It is often said a man with a sharp mind can be just as dangerous as a man with powerful muscles. The deadliest weapon of any warrior is the mind as it is truly stated."

"I see." said Matilda "I know what I could do…I could launch a surprise attack on them, maybe blind them with smoke bombs and take them down in an ambush."

"That sounds like a good idea." said Kai "Before you go though you need a disguise so that nobody will recognize you as you go out into battle. It is compulsory that the Princess of Chun-Nan keeps her identity hidden. Word travels fast around Chun-Nan and we wouldn't want enemies to hear that the Princess of Chun-Nan knows kung-fu, you'd be targeted relentlessly."

Matilda gulped over hearing this. If somebody found out she knew kung-fu, she'd become a popular target among enemies. A disguise sounded like a good idea, she was all too happy to have one.

"So what disguise am I going to wear?" asked Matilda.

"I purchased one for you in the marketplace the other day." explained Kai "Allow me to fetch it for you."

Kai left the room for one minute so he could fetch Matilda's disguise. In less than a minute, Kai returned with a folded up bundle of clothes. He handed it to Matilda and Kai led Matilda to a changing room so she could change into the costume. The changing room was located in a corner of the lair on the left side. Matilda entered the changing room and she closed the door behind her to get changed. Kai respectfully stepped away from the changing room.

A little while later Matilda emerged from the changing room completely dressed up and ready to go out and fight. The disguise that Kai had given her consisted of a black bodysuit with accompanying knee-high boots with silver plating on them, a family

logo on the chest section of the outfit, red wrist sections, a red belt and a piece of clothing that went over her shoulders and was tucked up in the belt at the bottom. Her hair was styled in a very long ponytail and she had a mouth mask. She hardly looked like a princess now. She looked more like a vigilante fighter. The costume did her body much justice, working well with her slender curves and slim figure. Kai admired Matilda and he smiled to himself. This disguise would do brilliantly for Matilda. There was no telling that she was a princess at all.

"How do I look?" came Matilda's muffled voice from behind the mask.

"You look fantastic Matilda." said Kai with pride "That disguise suits you."

"Thank you. I think I look quite good in this too." said Matilda, admiring herself "So may I go now?"

"Indeed." said Kai "Take Pi Du with you. He knows where the Huns are coming from. He'll be able to lead you to them."

"I will." said Matilda, hugging Kai graciously "Thank you. Wish me luck out there."

"Good luck my child." said Kai gently, hugging her back "I hope you will come back alive."

Matilda nodded and she broke up the hug. She left Kai's lair and ran off to meet with his messenger duck Pi Du and then she could go off and stop the Huns from massacring Chun-Nan. She hoped that she would win this battle and that the Huns would be deterred from invading the country…

As soon as Matilda had left the lair, she had gone off to arm herself with weapons that would be a great necessity for this mission and then met up with Master Kai's messenger, Pi Du the Duck. Pi Du was a Mobian duck with white feathers and a golden bill that many people often confusedly thought was literally made of gold due to

how golden it is in colour. He wore a red robe and wore a coolie-hat. He was a close friend of Kai and was all too happy to be his messenger. He was thrilled to get the chance to meet and team up with Princess Matilda herself right now. As for the arming up, Matilda had taken with her a belt of smoke bombs and some twin katanas. She also had attached a sheath containing a dagger onto her thigh for a surprise attack. Matilda was armed and ready and she was looking forward to giving the Huns a good thrashing. Nobody ever comes to her country and dares threaten its peace! This is what her mother wanted her to become and now the day was here at last, Matilda would get do what Tiana had done…defend the country and bring honour to her family. She was very excited over the very thought of bringing honour to the family and also the country too. As of this moment, Pi Du was flying through the skies with Matilda running after him. Matilda was able to keep up with the duck thanks to her kung-fu abilities and enhanced speed and Pi Du was impressed to see this. Not many people on foot can keep up with a flying Mobian after all. The two ended up traversing among a great distance, the journey even taking them through the plains and pass the Spiders of Anarchy's territory. After about half an hour, Pi Du eventually landed on top of a bunch of rocks that Matilda climbed up to reach him. The duck peered down to see if there was anything around on the other side of the rocks. Matilda reached the top and she remained down low in case anything was around and she would get spotted. She peered slowly over the rocks and saw what Pi Du could see. And what the two could see was none-other than a gang of sixty huskies, all muscular and very brutal looking in appearance and armed to the teeth with weapons. Their outfits varied in colour, design and appearances and their fur ranged from mostly yellow and grey with some brown and red furred huskies in the mix too. They all appeared to be resting though. They were all sitting down and not doing much of anything. Matilda looked at Pi.

"Are those the Huns?" she whispered.

"You bet they are princess." Pi whispered back "The Huns always consisted of various different huskies from various different regions. They're never anything else, always huskies. I often considered nicknaming them "Hun-skies" because of this." he added with a quiet chuckle.

"Very funny." said Matilda with a fake chuckle since she didn't think the joke was very funny and she didn't have time for humour "So who's the leader then? Every group has a leader."

"When I saw them charging earlier, that guy was in front of them all." said Pi, pointing at a husky "I think he's the leader."

Matilda looked in Pi's direction and surely enough she saw the husky he was pointing at. This one was a little different to the others. He was broad and muscular like ALL the Huns were but he had a bit more than that. His outfit was dark brown with a unique black pattern that spread up his right arm and across to his left shoulder. The right sleeve also had wave brown patterns on them. He wore matching brown trousers, heavy boots with a gold trim on them and silver solves and gold wrist cuffs on his wrists. He carried a heavy sword in a sheath on his back and was blind in his right eye. His left eye burned with a fiery red sclera and yellow pupil and the right eye was dead and grey with a pink scar going over it. He had a smaller scar beside his left eye. His fur was silvery grey and the muzzle was white. On his left hand, he had a metal attachment with three claws jutting out of it sitting atop it. He looked very frightening and very, VERY powerful. He was definitely the leader of the Huns and his name was Ra Zarr. Ra Zarr stood before the Huns and he made an announcement.

"We'll camp out here for a few hours and then continue our way up to the country." he boomed in a terrifying deep voice that made Matilda's spine tingle and her heart shudder "We'll reach Chun-Nan by tomorrow at the rate we're going. Let us hope that this time, we'll succeed in taking over the country and proving the Huns to be superior to all others."

"YEAH!" cheered the crowd of Huns that sat before Ra Zarr.

"Oh that's definitely the leader." said Matilda grimly "He's the guy I should worry about the most. He looks just fit for a leader, look at his muscles!" she gasped, taking note of his muscular physique "I bet he's very powerful! I hope I'll be strong enough to take him down..."

"You will be your majesty." said Pi reassuringly "You know kung-fu. Those guys don't know squat about martial arts. A single martial

artist is more powerful than any army in the world you know."

"I know, Master Kai tells me that a lot." said Matilda "Although still it didn't hurt to bring along some surprise attacks…" she added, taking note of the weapons she'd brought with her.

"So you have some kind of plan then?" asked Pi "Very good. Be careful out there princess."

"I will Pi." said Matilda with utmost certainty in her voice "Although I'm as nervous as anyone else is right now."

With that said, Matilda climbed over the rocks and carefully edged her way down the steep slope of the rocks. Matilda edged down and down until she made it to the bottom of the rocks and she darted towards the Huns, instantly catching their attention. The Huns all stood up and they gave Matilda a chorus of death glares and vicious growls. They instantly knew she was not the kind of company they were given her outfit and the fact she wasn't a Hun. Matilda didn't let the growling intimidate her and she just glared back at them all. Ra Zarr stepped forward and he pointed his claws at Matilda.

"Who are you and what are you doing here?!" he snarled.

"I am a kung-fu warrior with a name that you are forbidden to know." said Matilda coldly "And I come here to stop you from invading my country and causing havoc in it. Either leave here and go back where you came from or get mercilessly beaten up. Please don't make me resort to violence, I don't want to have to use violence as a means to an end."

Ra Zarr just laughed at the princess as if she'd just told a very funny joke (you do NOT want to know this guy's idea of a funny joke by the way!) to him. He stopped laughing and bared his claws, his face curled into a devil's smile.

"A woman comes to the Huns and dares order us to leave?!" he sneered "Chun-Nan must be desperate to save itself if they're sending a woman to stop us! And do you seriously think you can just order us to leave like this? We didn't come this far just to go home! You will stand down or be slaughtered you pathetic girl!"

"You are going to be sorry you said no to me…" said Matilda with a voice like ice.

She then whipped out some smoke bombs and she tossed them all into the air. She had thirteen bombs on her belt, more than enough to create a very big cloud of smoke. All thirteen bombs rained down on the Huns and broke open with a simple crash to the ground. An enormous cloud of smoke billowed out of the bombs and given how many there were and how strategically they had been thrown, the smoke spread out over the entire area and all the Huns were engulfed by it. Matilda smirked from behind her mask and she darted into the smoke cloud. She wouldn't need her eyes for this one for she had other senses to guide her through the smoke cloud. That was the one advantage she had in this scenario. Her kung-fu abilities and skills enhanced her senses over the years, giving her sight, hearing, smell and touch greater than the average Mobian. Matilda just needed her hearing while in the dust cloud though, sight and smell would do her no good in a cloud of smoke. Her hearing would be used to listen for the Huns coughing, spluttering and scrambling about. As Matilda ran into the smoke cloud and listened out for the Huns she could see the silhouette of one just ahead of her. She ran to the Hun and instantly nabbed him. She then proceeded to beat the living daylights out of the Hun, using all her skills that she had learnt over the years on the Hun. Once she had taken the Hun down, she ran off and listened out for another. She saw two Huns close together and she ran over to them. She beat them into unconsciousness and then ran off to find another. She kept this up for a while until eventually, the enormous smoke cloud cleared up and only Ra Zarr was left standing. The cloud had lifted up before she could have a chance to beat him up. Not matter though, Matilda had beaten all fifty-nine of Ra Zarr's minions into unconsciousness and now only Ra Zarr himself was left to fight. Ra Zarr saw all of his unconscious men and he was livid with rage. His army? Beaten by a woman?! Preposterous! That was all he was thinking right now. Clearly he had underestimated his feminine opponent! A mistake he was going to rectify himself. Ra Zarr drew out his huge sword and he prepared to do battle.

"You are an impressive woman mysterious fighter but you shall fall at my blade!" he snarled "Nobody stands up to the Huns and lives to

tell the tale!"

"Bet you won't say that anymore after I kick your backside!" crowed Matilda.

While not overly arrogant and cocky usually, Matilda felt it was best to develop a false personality to mask her true character. It helped her disguise work better when she did that. Matilda reached into the sheaths on her back and pulled out the twin katanas she had stored there. The katanas were long and sharp with silver blades that shone in the sunlight. Matilda twirled her katanas around and prepared to do battle. Ra Zarr was pretty surprised at the fact Matilda had katanas on her. He'd never seen a woman with swords before. Mind you, he's never seen a woman fight before so this is a double-dose of surprises for him. Ra Zarr didn't let it get to him though, he was not going to be intimidated by Matilda. Ra Zarr swung his sword around and then he stampeded towards Matilda, roaring furiously. Matilda was not intimidated in the slightest by him though. Ra Zarr swung his sword at Matilda but the princess dodged the attack by jumping up to avoid the swinging sword. She landed back on her feet and swung her katanas at Ra Zarr. The husky blocked the attack with his sword but Matilda wasn't going to leave it at that. She kneed Ra Zarr directly in the gut and made him double over. She spun around and roundhouse kicked the ruthless leader onto his back. Ra Zarr picked himself up and he fumed to himself.

"I recognize that fighting style…you know kung-fu!" he snarled crossly.

"Indeed I do and that is why you must surrender." said Matilda "You haven't a hope against me. Please stand down and spare yourself a nasty beating, this is your only warning."

"I'm not backing down now!" roared Ra Zarr "My family have been trying to conquer Chun-Nan for years now and I will be the one that leads the Huns to victory! I gave my word of honour that I would make this country mine!"

"Then you should take back that word of honour…" said Matilda coldly.

She lunged forward with her arms held out in an X-shape and she butted the husky in the gut. Ra Zarr doubled over and winced in pain. Matilda sheathed her katanas and then she unleashed all hell on the muscular husky. She punched him in various different places all over his body, uppercut him four times and then threw some powerful kicks. Ra Zarr could not keep up with the amazing kung-fu princess at all, she was much too fast and striking much too powerfully for him to properly defend himself. Matilda then roundhouse kicked Ra Zarr in the legs and tripped him up. He landed on his back and Matilda grabbed him by the tail. She swung Ra Zarr over onto his front as hard as she could. Ra Zarr picked himself up and he threw a punch at Matilda. Matilda blocked the punch by grabbing his arm. She twisted it sharply to the side and forced Ra Zarr down onto one knee. She then threw his arm to the side and punched him as hard as she could in the face. She wasn't really enjoying beating up Ra Zarr at all but she knew it had to be done. Violence was OK when used right after all and she was definitely using violence correctly in this battle. Ra Zarr was thrown onto his back, clutching his face and Matilda drew out her twin katanas. She pointed them at Ra Zarr and the husky was left wondering what to do. Matilda glowered at him.

"Leave here at once and don't you dare come near my country again." she said threateningly "If you do then I will not be so merciful the next time."

Ra Zarr was reluctant to do this but…he had no choice. He had to surrender or else he'd get skewered by the princess and he wouldn't be able to fulfil his family's vows. Ra Zarr put his hands to his head and fumed at Matilda.

"I surrender." he said crossly.

"Good, now get out of here." ordered Matilda "Don't ever let me catch you near this country or you will face a terrible punishment."

Talking threateningly to somebody was not something Matilda was enjoying at all but she knew that she needed to strike fear into the hearts of her villains so an intimidating attitude was the right way to go about it. Ra Zarr decided to do as he was told. After all, he could always come back and if he wanted to do that, he needed to live to

fight another day. Matilda sheathed her katanas and allowed Ra Zarr to stand back up. The husky then ran off, scampering away as quickly as possible on all fours and fleeing the area. His minions would wake up eventually and return home along with him since the golden rule of the Huns was if the leader is nowhere in sight or has retreated, return home immediately. Matilda watched Ra Zarr run away and she pulled her mask down so she could get some fresh air through her mouth again. What a brilliant first mission that was she couldn't help but think. She'd beaten the Huns and sent their leader packing. What great honour she had bestowed upon her country today. Pi Du flew down to Matilda and he landed beside her.

"That was amazing princess! You beat them all!" cried Pi Du excitedly.

"I know, and it's thanks to my cunning and skills that did it." said Matilda happily "Hopefully the Huns won't come back after this."

"I bet they won't." said Pi Du "After what you've done, they'll not dare come to Chun-Nan again!"

Matilda nodded, believing that that would be the case. She had stopped the Huns with merely smoke-bombs and her skills. Chun-Nan would never hear from them again…

Present Day…

"…and that was how my first mission went." said Matilda "How brilliantly I performed that day. I will admit, I'm still amazed I did so well."

"Wow…that's amazing." said Sally "You stopped the Huns just like that? You are an incredible woman Matilda."

"Indeed you are my angel." said Bladefeather, hugging his fiancée happily.

Matilda blushed bright red with pleasure.

"Aww…you're both so kind. Thank you so much." she said modestly.

"You're welcome." said Sally.

"You're very welcome dear." said Bladefeather softly "You know, hearing about your first mission makes me want to talk about MY first mission too."

"Oh very nice." said Matilda "So what was your first mission like?"

"Very intense." murmured Bladefeather "Me and Mushu both had to sneak over into an enemy ninja clan's territory and recover a stolen relic. Me and Mushu nearly lost our lives on that mission given how powerful and ruthless the clan was."

"Oh my gosh!" cried Matilda "Thank goodness you both made it out alive!"

"I'm glad we did too, otherwise I never would have met a pretty face such as yours." said Bladefeather, looking dreamily into his fiancée's eyes and making Matilda giggle a flattered giggle.

"Speaking of meeting…how did you two first met each other?" asked Sally curiously

"Oh…well that is an interesting story." said Matilda, surprised to hear such a question "A story that requires both of us really."

"We'd be all too happy to apprise you on such a story my honourable queen." said Bladefeather "In fact, I shall start off this story…"

But before he could say anything, somebody ran up to him and tapped him on the shoulder. Bladefeather turned his head and saw that it was none other than Mushu the Iguana, his best friend. Mushu looked like he had something to tell him.

"Oh Mushu, what brings your presence here then?" asked Bladefeather.

Mushu just used his hands to sign to Bladefeather what he wanted to say. Bladefeather read his hand signs.

"The…emperor…wants…us…to…meet…him…now…" he read as

Mushu signed to him.

"Oh, daddy wants us now?" asked Matilda "I wonder if this is to do with your Royal Fighters Service setting up our communication equipment?" she wondered, looking at Sally.

"I guess we should see." said Sally "Mushu, take us to the emperor."

Mushu nodded and he led the three off to where Emperor Tai was. Sally, Matilda & Bladefeather stood up and they walked off after Mushu. Once they saw what the emperor wanted them for, Matilda and Bladefeather could tell the story of how they met and Sally could hardly wait to hear it…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 152***

That's it for this part! Tune in for the final part next time where we see the story that I'm sure you all want to see...how Bladefeather and Matilda first met each other. All this and more next time on Tales from Mobius...

Rise of a Warrior Princess 4

Arc 19: Rise of a Warrior Princess

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 154-155

Part 4: First Meetings and Team-Ups

"So emperor, does this look OK to you?" asked a builder, his species being a beaver and his attire consisting of traditional builder attire such as overalls, boots and a hard hat, as he hopped down from the tall communications tower that he had just been building for Chun-Nan.

The Royal Fighters Service had been quite busy setting up the communications equipment that Chun-Nan had been promised after Emperor Tai and Queen Sally Acorn had allied their kingdoms*. They had to be told where to set up the equipment by Tai himself and now they had been working vigorously on setting everything up. It would take them a few days to get the whole communications network set up here but it would be worth it. Chun-Nan and New Mobotropolis would be in contact and the R.F.S. could give and receive help to and from Chun-Nan respectively. It made the whole service feel grand that more people were joining their organization. Hopefully the downfall of all evil would be certain now that kung-fu warriors would be joining them in this crusade against Eggman and other villains of Mobius. As of this moment, the hard working workers had set up a communications tower and had just started preparing to install it. First, they had to check with Tai and see how it looked and if it looked right to him. Tai observed the tall tower. It was very tall and had a huge silver sphere sitting atop it. There was a control panel at the base of the tower. The tower had been set up a fair distance from the village but thanks to its tall height, the populace of Chun-Nan would still be able to see it. It could be seen from miles around thanks to its shiny silver appearance and tall structure. Tai didn't see much problem with where the tower was, it looked just fine to him and the placing of it was good for him. He

smiled approvingly.

"This is very good gentleman, it's just right here." said Tai "You may start installing the tower and properly preparing it for use."

"Thanks your honour." said the builder with a two fingers up sign "We'll get started immediately."

"I do hope I'm not being too much of a burden to you workers by being particular about where everything has to go." said Tai concernedly "After all, I don't want to upset the populace in anyway."

"Eh, we're used to it." said the builder casually, picking up a hammer "We builders get told where things go all the time. You're not bothering us at all Mr. Emperor sir."

"That's good and please, just call me Emperor Tai." said Tai briskly.

"OK then Emperor Tai." said the builder, getting out some nails to hammer into the tower "Oh and by the way, we have some bodies spare on this job so we've sent them over to help your builders fix up your pagoda. I told them to follow your builder's advice since they know how it's meant to look."

"Ah that's good, thank you." said Tai brightly.

"Anytime." said the builder, preparing to work "OK boys! We're OK to start the real work! The emperor thinks this is OK! Let's get started!"

The other builders obeyed and they immediately started getting to work. All they were going to do really was set up the tower's mechanisms and prepare it for use. Now the place had been agreed on, they could start doing proper work on the tower. It had been set up, now its equipment needed readying and preparing for use. As the builders set to work, Princess Matilda, Bladefeather the Falcon, Mushu the Iguana and Queen Sally Acorn arrived at the scene and Tai turned around to see them all coming towards him. Tai's face brightened at the sight of them all.

"Ah Mushu, thanks for bringing everybody here." he said brightly.

Mushu bowed down to Tai respectfully.

"Good morning daddy." said Matilda, hugging her father graciously.

"Good morning precious." said Tai "What have you been up to this morning then?"

"Well I was doing my morning exercises and I even let Sally do some training with me." explained Matilda "She's quite good believe it or not."

"Your daughter's given me some good tips for the future too." said Sally "It's been an honour meeting her and even getting to train with her."

"Aw that's nice to hear." said Tai in awe "It's always nice to hear words like that from a guest."

"You're quite welcome." said Sally modestly "Matilda hasn't just given me some training though, she's even been telling me stories about herself."

"Have you?" said Tai, looking at Matilda "What kind of stories Matilda?"

"Oh just the death of mother, how I came to learn kung-fu and my first ever mission." explained Matilda "She's been very interested and has enjoyed listening to them all. Before you called us over I WAS going to tell her the story of how me and Bladefeather met."

"Oh I see, very lovely indeed." said Tai with a smile "Before you tell that story though I'd like you to see this communications tower. It's just been set up and now the builders are installing all its features in now."

Matilda, Bladefeather and Mushu looked at the communications tower that loomed above them, the builders working away on it as quickly and as carefully as possible. It was definitely a strange looking building to them since they had never seen anything like it before, especially hi-tech stuff like the communications tower. It would take some getting used to but Matilda thought that it didn't look too bad where it was right now. Bladefeather and Mushu

seemed unsure what to think of it. They looked at each other in wonder and Mushu just shrugged his shoulders, not knowing what to say (not that he can say anything anyway). Bladefeather looked back at Tai.

"Well…I'm not sure I can find any words to sum up any thoughts I have about this." he said.

"I know what to say." said Matilda "I think it's definitely unusual but it's for a good cause so it's OK in my books."

"I'm glad you like the hard work the R.F.S. is doing for Chun-Nan Matilda." said Sally brightly "I assure you this equipment will come in handy big time if you need to call us for help. Once these towers are ready, you'll be able to give and receive messages in no time at all."

Mushu seemed to smile at this idea, thinking that it was a very good idea indeed.

"Sounds very good indeed." said Bladefeather "Even though we send messenger birds or have an archer to deliver messages, your potent methods sound like they'll get the job done much quicker which is exactly what we need since time can be of essence in a desperate situation."

"Indeed." said Matilda "All this makes me even more happy that dad made the alliance with Queen Sally. Chun-Nan's gonna benefit from this most dearly indeed."

"And so shall New Mobotropolis." added Sally.

"So I take it you all approve then?" asked Tai.

"We do daddy, it's very good indeed and I think you picked a good place for it to go." said Matilda, beaming happily.

The Mobians were all too happy to do so. They left Emperor Tai behind to monitor the building and setting up of the communications tower and they walked off back to Bladefeather's pagoda, which wasn't that long of a walk away from the tower. Tai watched them walk away and then he turned his attention back onto the builders, pleased to see them getting to work and working so nicely and

efficiently on the tower. It took Sally, Mushu, Bladefeather and Matilda ten minutes to get back there and once they had arrived back at the pagoda, they all sat down in the garden again. Bladefeather sat beside Matilda, who was sitting beside a flower bed like she had before, Mushu at on Bladefeather's other side and Sally sat in front of the three.

"OK then, so how does the story of your first meeting begin?" asked Sally.

"It began 6 years ago when I was still sixteen." explained Matilda "And it began in Chun-Nan's marketplace of all places. Bit like how mother and father met each other for the first time in the marketplace…" she added, noting the similarity between her meeting Bladefeather and Tiana meeting Tai.

"Only thing is you weren't being mugged by ninja moles were you?" asked Sally.

"Not exactly." said Matilda.

"This story has a bit more than just how we first met too." added Bladefeather "It also shows how the Huns were defeated at last…"

"Wait a minute, I thought Matilda sent them packing in her first mission." interrupted Sally "Did they come back or something despite your threats?"

"They did unfortunately." muttered Matilda "I should have known that the Huns wouldn't stay gone too, Master Kai told me much about how arrogant they are."

"Anyway allow us to tell you how me and Matilda first met…and how those abhorrent Huns were defeated once and for all…" began Bladefeather, eager to start "Me and Mushu were out in the marketplace and admiring the lovely stalls to see what was on offer…"

Chun-Nan: The marketplace 6 years ago…

"Aaah…the marketplace, don't you just adore it Mushu?" asked Bladefeather the Falcon as he and his best friend Mushu the Iguana walked around the marketplace "The beauty and good-nature of this marketplace is unequivocal indeed wouldn't you agree?"

"Oh yes Bladefeather, I very much agree. I love it in this marketplace." said Mushu happily, admiring the joyous scenery around them. This was a time when Mushu could still talk and when he spoke, he had a rather youthful sounding voice.

The marketplace was as grand as it always was and bustling with activity just like any other day. People from all over the village were trekking through the marketplace and admiring the stalls, wondering what they sold and what they could afford to buy from them. The stalls looked as lovely as ever with their lovely colours, eye-catching banners with Chinese writing on them and some stalls even had balloons on them to look visually appealing to the public all around. Anyone walking around the marketplace always had a good time here and there was never a stall that didn't get at least one customer, every stall got a customer due to the wide variety of products that the market had on offer. Bladefeather and Mushu quite enjoyed seeing all the happy faces around the village although Bladefeather, not surprisingly, felt a bit indifferent about the amount of children here. He hated children after all, a hatred he'd soon grow out of as you already know. Regardless, Bladefeather did his best to ignore the children that are around and he focused on a stall that seemed to sell bracelet charms. He picked up one that was a bracelet with red eagle head shapes on them and he gave it a good look at. Mushu looked at it too.

"Hey, I'd get that if I were you." said Mushu "It'd suit you buddy. It has bird heads on them and they all bear your colours."

"Indeed they do, most befitting for a gentleman of my avian nature indeed." said Bladefeather "I think I shall purchase this item, it'd look very good on my wrist. Have your eyes been laid upon a bracelet of your fancy Mushu?" he asked.

"Nah, I'm not into bracelets." said Mushu "I will however check out the paintings stall. You know how much I love art."

"Indeed I do, your passion for artistic presentations is no secret between us." said Bladefeather, preparing to pay for the bracelet.

Mushu wondered off and headed towards the art stall, looking over his shoulder as Bladefeather caught the stall owner's attention and got ready to buy the bracelet. Unfortunately for Mushu, he wasn't watching where he was going for he was staring at Bladefeather and he ended up bashing into somebody. Mushu fell over onto his bottom and grunted whereas the person he bashed into fall onto her back and grunted a female grunt. He had bumped into a woman. But not just any woman, he had bumped into Princess Matilda herself! Matilda was lying on the ground, wincing in pain with a bunch of towels lying on top of her. She had a satchel around her shoulder too. Bladefeather saw what happened and he quickly asked to be excused for a minute while he dealt with the problem, promising to pay for his bracelet in a minute. Bladefeather darted over to Mushu and instantly started yelling at him.

"You clumsy little mendicant! You just knocked over a poor innocent woman!" he snapped "Be careful around here will you Mushu?!"

"Gee sorry Bladefeather, it was an accident!" grumbled Mushu "Hey doll, sorry about that, I wasn't looking where I was going." he said, standing up.

"Oh it's quite alright sir, I understand. Accidents happen after all." said Matilda, sitting up straight.

"We're very terribly sorry ma'am." said Bladefeather "Allow me the honour of making it up to you by helping you back onto your feet."

Bladefeather took Matilda's hand and he helped her to get back onto her feet, Mushu picking up the towels that lay on her as she stood up. As Bladefeather helped Matilda stand back up, he suddenly found himself staring at her. She looked gorgeous to him. Her emerald green eyes seemed to sparkle like stars to him as he looked into them. He found himself admiring her lovely slender body and the purple dress she wore (it's the one she wore in the previous chapter, not the one she wears nowadays). He also found it hard to keep his eyes off of her raven black hair, which was in a ponytail and tied up with a red ribbon. Bladefeather found himself almost

entranced by this woman. She looked beautiful to him. He'd never seen a woman this beautiful before. He just had to get talking with her.

"Um…excuse me? Is there something wrong sir?" asked Matilda politely.

"Nothing ma'am, I just cannot help but admire how bodacious you look." said Bladefeather slowly.

Matilda blushed bright red and Mushu just giggled at Bladefeather.

"Man, you're hitting on girls already?" sniggered Mushu "I should have seen that coming!"

Bladefeather elbowed Mushu in the ribs and made him cry out in pain.

"Please excuse the ill-manners of my colleague." said Bladefeather through gritted teeth "He prefers to banter a lot. He is a man of good-humour really."

"I can see that." said Matilda "By the way, allow me to introduce myself. I'm Princess Dalon Matilda. It's nice to meet you two lovely gentlemen."

Bladefeather's beak dropped open in shock.

"You…are…the Princess of Chun-Nan?" he gasped "What…what a magnanimous meeting this is! I've always yearned to see the Princess of Chun-Nan herself and now here she is, standing before me right now!"

He bowed down to Matilda instantly. Mushu shared Bladefeather's surprise at this revelation.

"No way, you're the Princess of Chun-Nan doll-face?" he gasped "What an honour it is to meet you!" he added, quickly bowing down to her.

"Boys please, there's no need to make such a fuss!" giggled Matilda, waving her hands hastily "And sir, please don't call me doll-face. I

hate that name and term." she added, looking at Mushu.

"My apologies." said Mushu apologetically.

"So you two, what are your names?" asked Matilda.

"I am Bladefeather the Falcon, Master of the Thousand Daggers and one of Chun-Nan's most efficient warriors of the avian genre. I set an exemplary example for avian Mobians all over Chun-Nan and I am a Kung-Fu Master." introduced Bladefeather "I have trained quite vigorously in the sport of kung-fu and I am a prodigious fighter in battle…"

"We get it feathers!" snapped Mushu, clamping Bladefeather's beak shut hastily "Excuse ol feather butt here princess, he talks a lot."

Matilda giggled, making Bladefeather feel a little embarrassed in front of her. Bladefeather pushed Mushu off of himself and made him let go of his beak.

"Do not comment on my overly verbose nature if you please Mushu, I'm pretty sure Matilda doesn't mind me being overly verbal!" growled Bladefeather.

"Please clam down sir." said Matilda "I'm sure your friend didn't mean any harm. Besides, you were talking a bit too much there Bladefeather. I was about to ask you to stop myself."

Bladefeather went red with embarrassment. He coughed nervously and put his wing over his face.

"Oh…excuse me…how abysmal of me to behave like this…" he mumbled "My deepest apologies princess."

"It's quite alright." said Matilda "So," she said, looking at Mushu "Do you know kung-fu too…Mushu is it?"

"Yep your honour, that's my name." said Mushu in a prideful manner as if he was pleased to have the name Mushu "As for your earlier question, yes I do know kung-fu. I'm a master like Bladefeather is. Heck, we're student buddies! We trained together since childhood and we're still best buddies now."

"That's very lovely." said Matilda "Well, it's been lovely to meet you two. I'm terribly sorry but I have to get going now." she said, preparing to go "Daddy will be expecting me back now."

"Wait, what about these towels?" asked Mushu, pointing to the rolled up towels he had under his arm "Weren't you buying them or something?"

"Um…no." said Matilda, remembering the towels that she had been looking at a moment ago "I was looking at them until you knocked me over. I'm not buying them, please put them back."

Mushu obeyed and he put the towels back in a towel stall that was standing nearby. With that done, Matilda turned to leave but Bladefeather grabbed her hand and stopped her.

"Bladefeather please let me go." said Matilda "I need to get going."

"Please don't leave so soon, I want to converse some more with you your grace." said Bladefeather "I'm very interested in knowing more about you, please stay a bit longer."

"I'm sorry but I can't." said Matilda "I NEED to go now. Daddy doesn't like it when I'm out for too long."

With that said, Matilda took her hand out of Bladefeather's grip and she walked off quickly. Bladefeather watched her leave, desperate to call out to her and try to get her to stop and stay. But he knew that he couldn't keep the emperor waiting, it would be mean to keep the emperor's daughter from him a minute longer so he would be a proper gentleman and let Matilda go. As Matilda walked away, Mushu smirked at Bladefeather.

"You like her don't you?" he chuckled "You like Chun-Nan's little princess don't you red head?"

Bladefeather just fumed at Mushu furiously.

"Don't act so peevish Mushu." he murmured through gritted teeth "It doesn't matter if I harbour any like for the princess does it? You remember what our master told us before, "A true kung-fu warrior respects his or her royals and must always be pleasant to them". he

recited.

"Unless of course they're assholes to which in that case, we can get them kicked off the throne and get a better emperor." Mushu reminded Bladefeather "Remember what happened to that Hunan Shen guy? The people didn't like him so we got him kicked off the throne and had Dalon Tai take his place."

"Yes, I knew that thank you very much." said Bladefeather impatiently "Now then let us drop this conversation so that I may finish purchasing that bracelet shall we?"

"Gee, you're so uptight and over-bearing at times you know that?" sighed Mushu grumpily "Seriously dude, liven up and stop being so rude and fastidious."

Bladefeather ignored Mushu and just stormed off back to the stall he had been at so that he could finish purchasing his bracelet. Luckily for him, the stall-owner had held onto it for him although the stall-owner had been very tempted to put it back and assume Bladefeather had changed his mind and didn't want it now. Bladefeather arrived back at the stall and resumed his interrupted business while Mushu went over to the art-stall as originally intended before bumping into Matilda. But they wouldn't be staying around for long for just after Bladefeather finally purchased the eagle-headed bracelet, a loud, shrill scream emitted from the outskirts of the market place and the scream was quickly silenced by a loud thwack that made everybody in the marketplace jump in alarm and wonder what was happening. Bladefeather and Mushu were quick to act. They darted off and ran towards where the scream had been coming from. They were quickly stopped though for a large crowd was standing in front of them and all looking very frightened and worried. Bladefeather and Mushu joined the crowd and saw what was stirring them up so badly. A hooded figure whose appearance was concealed in a cloak had Princess Matilda in his arms and the princess herself was unconscious with a large cut on her head. She had been knocked out thanks to a blow to the head and now the cloaked assassin was taking her away! The satchel Matilda had was draped around the figure's arm for he thought the satchel would be of some importance. The figure ran off as fast as he could, leaving behind the terrified crowd who could only stand

and cry out in fear.

"Our princess! Some mercenary has kidnapped her!" cried a female nanny goat wearing a white tunic and thick rimmed-spectacles.

"Somebody help her! Who knows what will happen to her?!" shrieked a male lizard who wore a black robe with gold trimmings.

Bladefeather and Mushu were horrified at what they had just seen too.

"Some aberrant miscreant has abducted the princess! Mushu, we must rescue her for the glory of Chun-Nan!" cried Bladefeather.

"I'm with you on that buddy!" declared Mushu eagerly "NOBODY kidnaps a cute woman on MY watch, especially if said cute woman's related to royalty!"

The crowd were all too happy to hear that Bladefeather and Mushu were willing to rescue Matilda. They instantly started cheering for the two kung-fu warriors upon hearing such good heroism. Bladefeather smiled conceitedly (he was a lot more vain than he is nowadays!) as he took in the crowd's cheering and the falcon took flight with a mighty flap of his wings. Mushu grabbed onto Bladefeather's feet and he was lifted up into the air by the falcon taking off into the sky. Bladefeather had seen where Matilda's kidnapper had gone so he knew where he was flying. Unfortunately for him, the kidnapper was far out of sight but Bladefeather could see a trial of footprints that the kidnapper had clumsily left behind in the plains that stretched out beyond the village of Chun-Nan. Bladefeather flew off, following the footprint trial and headed off into the distance, hoping to catch the kidnapper and make him pay for taking the beautiful princess like he had just done…

It had been a while since Matilda had been knocked out and taken away and now Matilda was beginning to come to at last. The princess groggily began to wake up and the first thing her instincts told her to do was place her left hand tenderly over the cut on her head. She had been hit pretty hard and the club she had been hit

with was a bit rough as well which is why such a cut had been left on her head after being hit. The cut stung really badly and her head was throbbing like mad, as if someone was using a pneumatic drill inside her skull.

"Ooooooow…my head…ugh…it hurts so bad!" she moaned "Man… who in the name of Chun-Nan hit me…?"

She tried to stand up…only to bang her head on a ceiling that was not that high above her. Matilda yelped and gripped her now-throbbing-even-more head in agonizing pain. Matilda rubbed her head better and analyzed her surroundings. She was no longer in Chun-Nan's marketplace, she was locked up in a tiny steel cage that was so small she couldn't stand up in it, only sit or lie down. It was far too cramped for her to so much as through a punch and trying to break the bars was out of the question, there wasn't enough room to use her full strength so Matilda was completely trapped in this cage. The cage itself was sitting at the mouth of a cave up in a mountain so Matilda wasn't even on ground level. Matilda instantly panicked and began tugging on the bars, desperate to break out of the cage. She was sitting on her knees and had both hands wrapped around the bars of the cage. She pulled on them but she couldn't break them. They were too strong for her and she just didn't have the room to use her full strength. Matilda began to breathe very fast. She was locked in a cage and had no idea where she was! What was going to happen now?!

"Oh god, please don't let this be real!" whimpered Matilda "Please, please, PLEASE don't let this be real! Let this be a nightmare!"

But it was no nightmare, it was a terrible reality. She truly was trapped in a cage and in a cave somewhere up a mountain with no way of escaping. Matilda stopped her pitiful struggling and curled up in the cage, pressing her knees against her chest very tightly and shuddering to herself. She wasn't left worrying for long though for somebody walked into the cave and up towards her. It was Ra Zarr, the leader of the Huns! Matilda practically felt her heart stopping at the mere sight of Ra Zarr. She grew more frightened than ever now she knew she was in the grasp of the Hun leader himself. If she wasn't in a cage, she wouldn't be afraid of Ra Zarr right now but given she was in a cage, she was downright terrified of him now for

she was completely helpless and at his mercy. Amazing how different you feel when you're in someone's captivity. Ra Zarr knelt down and peered into the cage, smirking at Matilda.

"Hello Princess of Chun-Nan." he said in a slithering voice that made Matilda's spine tingle.

"Please, oh please let me out of here!" begged Matilda fearfully, gripping the bars and practically losing her mind with worry "Let me out of this cage! Please! I can't stand being locked up like this!"

"Nah princess, I think I'll leave you in there." purred Ra Zarr "For I've got big plans for you."

"What do you want with me?" asked Matilda nervously "Oh god… please don't tell me I'm a hostage or something!"

"You are indeed sweetheart." sneered Ra Zarr "I took the liberty of kidnapping you, while in a disguise of course, and holding you for ransom. As of now, I have sent a ransom note to the Emperor of Chun-Nan and the note demands that if he wants you back in one piece…he has to relinquish the country to me and the Huns. He'll easily cave in, I know he will. He'll give me Chun-Nan…and I will have finally fulfilled my family's destiny."

He then proceeded to cackle a cold, cruel cackle at the caged princess. Matilda was horrified to hear this. She was not only a prisoner, she was a hostage too?! How horrible! She had to escape before Emperor Tai gave into Ra Zarr's cruel demand! Matilda tugged on the bars.

"You can't do this! You just can't do this! Let me out! You won't use me as a hostage!" screamed Matilda frantically.

"Be quiet!" snarled Ra Zarr, whipping out his sword and pointing it at Matilda, making the mongoose back off and crawl to the back of the cage where she pressed her back against the bars in fear.

Ra Zarr poked the sword through the bars and poked Matilda's chest with the tip of the sword, making her shudder and gulp nervously.

"If you want to live then I suggest you stay quiet you impudent woman!" growled Ra Zarr "Although I already am tempted to run you through right now!"

"Why? What did I EVER do to you?!" wailed Matilda.

"Why you beat up all my men and insulted my honour by forcing me to retreat." explained Ra Zarr "How do I know it was you? Well this satchel you had on you contained some very interesting evidence…"

He then showed that he had Matilda's satchel around his shoulder and he opened it up. The satchel contained…Matilda's vigilante disguise! He spilled the contents on the ground and Matilda put her hands over her mouth in horror at the fact that Ra Zarr had found out her secret and her disguise was being thrown onto the ground in front of her cage.

"M-m-my disguise!" she shrieked.

"Exactly, this satchel contained the clothes that the woman who defeated me wore which means YOU are the mysterious warrior who defeated me and my soldiers!" snarled Ra Zarr "I should kill you for this…but not yet. Once the emperor gives up Chun-Nan, THEN I will kill you and I promise you that!"

"Oh no! No please, you can't!" cried Matilda desperately "You can't kill me! Please don't do it!"

"Begging will get you nowhere heathen so don't try it!" snapped Ra Zarr "Now remain quiet while I await the reply to my note!"

Matilda did as she was told for making noise and begging wouldn't do any good at all. Ra Zarr took his sword out of the cage, sheathed it and then got up to his feet. He left the cave and wondered outside to receive any replies to his note that would likely come to him. Matilda was left alone in the cage with nothing to do but raise her knees to her chest and warp her arms around her legs. She couldn't help but cry over her predicament. She'd barely begun her life as a kung-fu warrior and already she was going to meet her end. If only she hadn't gotten caught like this! Chun-Nan was going to be in a terrible state now, wondering whether to give up for her freedom or

not and then losing their princess to the Huns. The whole situation was pretty hopeless now and Matilda couldn't think of how she could escape the cage and get away from the Huns. All she could do now was cry over her coming fate…

But it seemed help was at hand for Bladefeather and Mushu were heading towards the mountain that Ra Zarr had taken Matilda to. It had taken them a while to get there but they were almost there at last. Bladefeather flew as fast as he could towards the mountain with Mushu holding on tightly to his ankles. As they neared the mountain though, Mushu began to look puzzled.

"Uh Bladefeather, are you sure the princess is here?" asked Mushu.

"Well the footprint trial has generously led us to the mountains so she must be up here." noted Bladefeather "I hope she is too, I dread to think what evil the assassin maybe doing to poor Matilda."

"Gee, you seem awfully eager to save a woman you've barely even met for more than five minutes." joked Mushu.

"She's the Princess of Chun-Nan you ignorant lizard!" snapped Bladefeather "Of course I'm eager to save her! Loyalty to the royals is one of the most important things about being a kung-fu master!"

"Oh Bladefeather, I'm just kidding!" moaned Mushu "Gee, you're such a sourpuss you know that?"

Bladefeather ignored Mushu and continued flying towards the mountain. Unfortunately for him, Ra Zarr spotted him. He was standing at the cave entrance and waiting for some kind of messenger bird to arrive with hopefully a reply to his ransom note. The huge husky glared at the oncoming falcon and iguana as they neared the cave. He instantly knew they weren't company he wanted. He instantly assumed that they were unwanted company and that they might possibly be here to try and save the poor princess he had locked up in a cage. Ra Zarr just raised his fist claws and prepared to greet the new arrivals. As for Bladefeather, he could see Ra Zarr standing there and waiting for him and Mushu to come. Bladefeather could tell that he wasn't friendly at all.

"There's a husky with claws on his fist awaiting our arrival." muttered Bladefeather "We shall have to take it upon ourselves to take him down first. I bet he's Matilda's kidnapper."

"I'm willing to bet that too pal." said Mushu "Say, he looks familiar too. Isn't he leading the Huns or something like that?"

"He is." murmured Bladefeather "His name is Ra Zarr and he's the current leader of the Huns according to recent hearings that drift around the country. He and the Huns were defeated a few months ago by a vigilante warrior. It's perceptible and unequivocal that the Huns are striking again. I am willing to gamble on the theory that they've kidnapped Matilda to use as a hostage in their baneful ambitions to conquer Chun-Nan."

"Seems legit Bladey." said Mushu "Well nobody's using the princess as a hostage! Bladefeather, throw me at Ra Zarr!" he ordered.

"That's just what I was plotting to do…" purred Bladefeather deviously.

Bladefeather, who was now pretty much at the mountain, drew his legs back and he threw them upwards, sending Mushu hurling through the air as soon as the iguana let go of his ankles. Mushu hurled through the air like a rocket and came zooming down to the ground towards Ra Zarr. Mushu came in so fast that Ra Zarr didn't even have time to get out of his way. Mushu raised up his feet and he crashed feet-first into the husky, knocking him down onto his back and sending him skidding across the hard, rocky ground that left him with a very sore back after that. Mushu pinned him down and he grabbed his throat with his hands.

"Oh yeah baby, the iguana's here to kick some Hunny-butt!" cried Mushu joyfully "Now here's something I like to call "Let-the-princess-go-or-I-will-eviscerate-you"!" he growled threateningly, raising his fist and preparing to punch the fearsome Hun leader.

Ra Zarr just swiped his fist claws at Mushu and made the iguana jump off of him to avoid getting slashed. Ra Zarr picked himself up and he drew out his sword. He ran up to Mushu and swung the sword at him. Mushu dodged the attack by jumping into the air and

he kicked Ra Zarr in the knee, making the Hun leader bend down and cringe in pain. The knee is always a sensitive spot to attack after all. Mushu then roundhouse kicked Ra Zarr in the head and knocked him down onto his side. Ra Zarr picked himself up and he swung his sword at Mushu again. Mushu dodged the attack by ducking and he slugged Ra Zarr in the gut. Ra Zarr uppercut Mushu in the face and then slashed him across the stomach with the tips of his fist claws. Mushu fought the pain in his stomach and he rammed Ra Zarr in the gut. He slammed him against the wall but Ra Zarr grabbed Mushu's head and forced him away from himself with a mighty push. He then head-butted Mushu in the snout and kicked him in the gut. Mushu stumbled backwards but he was back on the attack in no time, lunging into the air and roundhouse punching Ra Zarr in the face. Ra Zarr was sent slamming against the wall again. Mushu lunged at Ra Zarr but the Hun leader grabbed Mushu in a bear hug and he slammed the iguana against the wall like a fly swatter swatting a fly. Ra Zarr even slammed him on the ground and then proceeded to squeeze Mushu as hard as he could. Mushu however managed to break free by biting Ra Zarr on the nose. The husky howled in pain over the bite he received and he let go of Mushu to clutch his nose. Mushu then tripped up Ra Zarr with a kick to the legs and brought him down onto the ground.

As Mushu fought Ra Zarr, Bladefeather swooped over head and landed in front of Matilda's cage. The princess had stopped crying and had been watching Mushu fight Ra Zarr, overjoyed to see help had arrived. Now Bladefeather was here to get her out of the cage.

"Are you alright my princess?" asked Bladefeather concernedly.

"I am now you and your friend are here to save me." said Matilda brightly "Please, get me out of this horrible cage, it's cramped in here and my knees are killing me!" she added, tugging on the bars.

Bladefeather summoned a dagger from airspace and he stuck it into the lock on the cage. He began to twist the dagger this way and that in the hopes of picking the lock with it. After a few twists of the dagger, the lock undid and the cage opened up, freeing the imprisoned princess. Matilda instantly crawled out of the cage and stood up straight, reliving the pain in her knees that she had received from being stuck on them whilst inside the cage.

Unfortunately, Ra Zarr looked over his shoulder as he and Mushu continued to fight and he saw that Matilda was now free from her cage. Ra Zarr yelled furiously only to get clapped across the head by Mushu. Mushu then ran over to Matilda and Bladefeather to take their side and Ra Zarr picked himself up, fuming at them furiously.

"Well, well, well…looks like the Hun has met his match." teased Mushu.

"You, Ra Zarr, are under arrest for abducting and imprisoning our fair and lovely princess!" snarled Bladefeather, pointing the dagger at Ra Zarr.

"That's not all, he attempted to use me for ransom." explained Matilda "He's already sent a note to my dad."

"I had a sneaky suspicion that his intentions for you were blackmail…" fumed Bladefeather "All the more reason for us to incarcerate you, you baneful, insidious, dishonourable canaille!" he growled at Ra Zarr.

"I'm not going down this easily!" growled Ra Zarr "Huns, ATTACK!" he thundered at the top of his voice.

Then suddenly, before anyone could guess what was going to happen, all fifty-nine of Ra-Zarr's henchmen suddenly jumped out from tunnels in the walls that led deeper into the cave and they surrounded the kung-fu warriors. They had been hiding as a contingency plan and now Ra Zarr had called them out to help him beat the kung-fu warriors and put Matilda back in her cage. Matilda picked up her satchel and stood close to Bladefeather worriedly. Bladefeather drew out another dagger and prepared to do battle with the Huns. Mushu was ready to unleash all hell on the Huns. The Huns all lunged at the warriors with their swords all drawn out ready to skewer them like kebabs on a stick. Bladefeather however flew into the air and grabbed Matilda and Mushu by their wrists with his feet, lifting them up off the ground as he did so. Bladefeather flew over the Huns and he put down Matilda and Mushu by the cave entrance.

"Matilda, find a place to hide. Me and Mushu will take care of those

gamin." ordered Bladefeather.

"Please…be careful you two." said Matilda concernedly.

"We will be cutie." said Mushu reassuringly "Come on Bladey, let's bring in the thunder!" he declared, charging into battle like an excited knight charging towards the enemy.

Bladefeather ran off after Mushu, his daggers in hand and ready to attack. Matilda did as she was told and she ran off to find a place to hide. But she wasn't going to hide for real; she was going to hide so she could change into her disguise. Matilda wasn't going to sit out of this one, she was going to join in. Matilda found an entrance to a tunnel in the wall and she darted inside. Now she was hidden, she could change into her disguise and defeat the Huns once and for all…

Over to Bladefeather and Mushu, Bladefeather was unleashing his most powerful attack on the Huns. He simply spun around on the spot like a spinning top and sent hundreds of daggers hurling through the air and whizzing towards them. Mushu had thrown himself onto the floor to avoid accidentally getting hit by a dagger as they flew around in every direction. The Huns all ran away like frightened puppies at the sheer number of daggers that Bladefeather was throwing at them. Some Huns were unlucky to get a dagger in the back as they tried to run and this attack alone ended up bringing the Hun's numbers down to a measly thirty, including Ra Zarr. The remaining thirty that had escaped the daggers had taken cover into the tunnels and were waiting for Bladefeather to stop spinning around and throwing daggers. This was bound to happen since Bladefeather's attack, while deadly, isn't entirely reliable since it causes him to get dizzy after while. And after a while, Bladefeather ended up getting dizzy and he fell over onto his side, gripping his head and trying to get his eyeballs to stay still for they were still spinning around like lottery balls in a lottery machine. Some day, Bladefeather would learn not to make himself so dizzy. Mushu got back to his feet and helped Bladefeather get back up, the falcon still feeling wobbly.

"Whoa Bladefeather, you have GOT to try and not make yourself so dizzy when you do that attack." said Mushu.

"I know I should…" droned Bladefeather groggily.

The Huns saw their chance to attack again. They all ran out of their hiding place, Ra Zarr ahead of them all, and they thundered towards Bladefeather and Mushu. The two barely had time to react before the Huns pounced on them both and then pinned them down to the ground. Three Huns each pinned down Bladefeather and Mushu, two Huns each holding down their arms and one each sitting on their backs. The two kung-fu warriors couldn't get free from the grasp of the Huns. They were well and truly stuck. Ra Zarr drew out his sword and he aimed for their necks.

"Now you both will die by my blade." he growled softly "That'll teach you to interfere with the Huns!"

He raised the sword and prepared to behead Bladefeather and Mushu but before he could bring the sword swinging down to their necks, something pile-dived him from behind and sent him hurling into the wall on the other side of the room. It was, of course, Princess Matilda all suited up in her brilliant disguise and ready to kick some Hun backside. Matilda kicked the Huns that were pinning down Bladefeather and Mushu and the two were able to stand back up again. The falcon and iguana were quick to thank her for this but of course, they didn't know who this warrior really was. They had no idea they were thanking Matilda right at this moment.

"You have my utmost thanks for saving our lives mysterious warrior." said Bladefeather with a bow.

"Say, are you the mysterious warrior who beat the Huns last time?" asked Mushu.

"I am indeed." said Matilda, her voice slightly disguised so Bladefeather and Mushu wouldn't recognize her "My name is Kai Tiana and I'm here to make sure that the Huns are stopped for good."

Matilda had decided to add onto her disguise by adapting a fake name, combining her mother and master's name to make the perfect alias. It certainly seemed to work since Bladefeather and Mushu had no idea they were talking to Princess Matilda right now.

"Well thanks for the save Tiana." said Mushu gratefully "So shall we wrap up this battle then?"

"Indeed sir." said Matilda "I'll deal with Ra Zarr, the rest are yours."

"As you wish." said Mushu, running over to Ra Zarr and kicking him over towards Matilda.

Ra Zarr hurled through the air and Matilda stepped to the side to move out of the husky's way. Ra Zarr zoomed outside and he came down with a heavy crash outside the cave. Matilda ran outside to deal with him, leaving Bladefeather and Mushu to deal with the remaining Huns. This wasn't much of a challenge at all since Bladefeather had his daggers ready and he prepared to use his signature attack once again…

Outside, Ra Zarr picked himself up and Matilda stood before him, ready to beat him up like she had done before. Ra Zarr growled at Matilda and he bared his fist claws.

"Princess! You humiliated me once, you will not humiliate me again!" snarled Ra Zarr "And that pathetic disguise of yours isn't going to save you this time! Now I know who you are, the element of surprise is gone now!"

"Doesn't matter, I'll still defeat you Ra Zarr." said Matilda coldly "And since you know my true identity…I can't let you live either. My secret must not be allowed to live with you."

It was not often Matilda intended to flat out kill somebody but in this case, she was willing to make an exception. Kai had told her that sometimes you have to be extreme, especially if some evil-doer knows your secret. Ra Zarr raised his claws and he thundered towards Matilda, rage burning in his evil eyes and salvia steaming from his vicious jaws. Matilda just bent down into a battle-ready stance and prepared to attack. Ra Zarr lunged at Matilda with his claws but Matilda dodged by stepping to the side. She kung-fu chopped Ra Zarr in the head and then kicked him in backside. Ra Zarr managed to remain standing though and he swiped his claws at Matilda. Matilda bent over backwards to dodge the claws but Ra Zarr kicked her in the leg and made her fall over. Ra Zarr drew his

arm back and he lunged at Matilda, preparing to skewer her with his claws. Matilda rolled out of the way, leaving Ra Zarr to plunge them into the ground. Ra Zarr grumbled furiously and he tried to yank his claws out of the ground. Matilda kicked Ra Zarr and she kicked him so hard that his claws ended up snapping as his body was thrown to the side by the kick. Ra Zarr rolled across the ground and he came to a stop near the edge of the ledge he and Matilda were on. Matilda threw a punch at Ra Zarr but Ra Zarr blocked it with his hand and he sharply twisted Matilda's arm to the side. Matilda screamed in pain but she fought it just like Kai had trained her to do and she tried to wrestle herself free. Ra Zarr punched Matilda in the face and then uppercut her in the chin. Matilda staggered backwards and Ra Zarr punched her again. Matilda punched Ra Zarr back but Ra Zarr took the punch and he slugged Matilda in the gut. The gut was always a weak spot for Matilda as it wasn't her strongest area so getting punched in it hurt her more than anywhere else. Matilda doubled over and Ra Zarr grabbed her by the shoulders. He lifted her up to his height but Matilda kicked him in the gut to make him let go of her. Ra Zarr dropped Matilda and Matilda threw a massive head-butt at Ra Zarr. A kung-fu warrior has a skull of steel and a head-butt from a kung-fu warrior would not hurt the warrior throwing the head-butt, only the opponent. Ra Zarr clutched his head in agonizing pain but Matilda didn't let him rub it better. She kicked Ra Zarr in the face and then uppercut him in the chin. The attack sent Ra Zarr stumbling near the edge and he was practically falling off it right now what with his heels now peering over the edge of the ledge. Matilda took a deep breath and decided to do the one thing that she never wanted to do…kill somebody. It was for her own good though. If Ra Zarr blabbed her secret then she could be an even more popular target then before. She needed to keep her secret and finishing off Ra Zarr was the only way to go about it. Matilda ran up to Ra Zarr… and kicked him in the chest, sending him falling off the ledge and tumbling to his rocky doom. Ra Zarr screamed in anguish as he plummeted down the mountain. Matilda looked away, unable to watch his horrible demise. Ra Zarr was definitely gone for good now. Matilda cringed to herself, ashamed she had to kill somebody. She hoped that this would never happen again.

"What a horrible thing I've had to do." she said with disgust "I hope I NEVER have to kill somebody again. At least my secret will be safe

now and maybe the Huns will give up, knowing their leader is dead."

Just as she said that, Bladefeather and Mushu ran out of the cave and they ran up towards Matilda.

"Tiana! You will be happy to hear this, the Huns have all been killed!" cried Bladefeather "Me and Mushu managed to finish them all off, mostly me since I used the Thousand Daggers technique on them all."

"The Huns are all dead?" gasped Matilda "Um…good. The Huns will never cause harm to Chun-Nan again. I managed to kill their leader although I'm not pleased I had to do so."

"We understand." said Mushu "We don't like having to kill somebody too. In this case though, it was kill or be killed. The Huns were too dangerous to leave alive. They'd been attacking Chun-Nan for years, it was about time we put a stop to that."

"I agree." said Matilda "Now Chun-Nan will be at peace…until the next danger strikes. Well, it's been an honour fighting among you two. I hope we fight together again someday soon."

"I do too." said Bladefeather.

With that said, Matilda ran off into the tunnel she had gotten changed into so she could change back into her old clothes. Bladefeather and Mushu didn't see where she went for she ran so fast that they couldn't see where she had run off too. As soon as she disappeared, Bladefeather and Mushu began looking around to see where Matilda was hiding since to them, they just assumed she was still hiding somewhere. They looked around the ledge and looked for where Matilda might be hiding…

Present Day…

"…and that concludes our story." finished Bladefeather and Matilda in unison.

"Wow…that was one amazing story you two." gasped Sally, unable

to believe what she had just been told "Your first meeting certainly wasn't like any other first meeting I've heard. You meet each other in the marketplace and then end up defeating the Huns together, albeit unknowingly since Matilda was disguised."

"Indeed." said Bladefeather "I must ask though Matilda, you killed the Hun leader just to keep your identity secret, why did you reveal yourself the time Shadow attacked Chun-Nan**? You threw away the meaning of your disguise because of that."

"Oh…that…well at the time Zira the Ruthless attacked Chun-Nan*** my disguise had grown old, torn and I was slowly outgrowing it so I needed a new one." explained Matilda "But unfortunately at the time Shadow attacked, I didn't have my new disguise yet. So because of Shadow being so powerful and hard to take down, I was forced to abandon my subtlety and reveal that I'm a kung-fu warrior. It's been costly for sure since now every darn villain in Chun-Nan was to kill me now but still, I had to do it."

"I see." said Bladefeather "Well Matilda, sacrificing your secrecy may have been costly but it was for a good cause. I will say though it is a surprise that you were the mysterious "Kai Tiana" all along. Just makes me more glad that I met you." he added with a sly purr that made Matilda giggle.

"Aw Bladefeather, stop it." giggled Matilda "You'd still love me even if you didn't know I knew kung-fu."

"That is true. I fell for your beauty, not your skills after all." said Bladefeather "But your skills definitely make you an amazing woman Matilda and your amazing nature makes me even more glad I fell for you."

"Aww…that's nice." said Matilda.

With that said, Matilda and Bladefeather kissed each other just like they love to do. Mushu watched this with awe and he put his hands to his cheek with his head titled to one side. Sally shared Mushu's expression.

"Doesn't this just warm your heart Mushu?" asked Sally.

Mushu nodded agreeably.

"You know…I bet you wish you could talk again." said Sally, pitying Mushu's muteness and how he seemed to hate being mute now.

Mushu's face fell and he nodded agreeably. He really wished he could speak again but thanks to Zira, he couldn't. Matilda and Bladefeather stopped kissing and they could see that Mushu looked sad over his muteness.

"I miss Mushu's voice too." said Matilda sadly "He had a nice voice when he could speak and he really got to let out his personality when he still had his voice. But thanks to Zira…he'll never speak again."

"Still though, Mushu is still a great friend and his muteness doesn't change him at all to me." said Bladefeather "He's still Mushu, quiet or not."

That made Mushu feel a bit better and much to Bladefeather's delight, the iguana even smiled at him.

"That's nice of you to say." said Sally happily "So now I've heard the whole story Matilda…" she added, looking over at Matilda "I can easily say you've had a pretty amazing life. It's been fascinating hearing the story on how you came to learn kung-fu and how you came to meet your now soon-to-be husband. Thanks ever so much for telling me the story Matilda." she added with a bright smile on her face.

"It's been a pleasure." said Matilda "Thank you for listening and enjoying it so much."

"You're welcome." said Sally happily.

Matilda beamed. She had enjoyed sharing her story with Sally and also Bladefeather and Mushu and she began to wonder what stories she'd end up having to tell in the future. Matilda knew that her life maybe extravagant now but the future was definitely going to hold more extravagancies for her as she continued to live…

Footnotes:

*** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 152***

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 63***

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Episode 52***

So that's it for this arc! I hope you enjoyed hearing Matilda's back story to the fullest detail and I hope you enjoy the next Tales from Mobius arc.

Until then though tune back into Heroes of Mobius when we encounter "Fintievus's Gambit"...

Honeymoons and Rats 1

Arc 20: Honeymoons and Rats

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 159-160

Part 1: No Peace for the Lovers

Even in moments like what's currently going on right now, somewhere there is a peaceful moment to be enjoyed. Things had been edgy around Sonic the Hedgehog and his friends lately. Dr. Finitevus had stricken again and tried to make himself the new Enerjak*, then Sonic and Tails needed to go to Megapolis to help with a problem going on there** and now Sonic was investigating the disappearances of Dark Cat and Kiara the Cheetah, two members of the Megapolis Royal Fighters*** and while that was going on, Bunnie Rabbot and Geoffrey St. John were having their first date… which isn't going all too well at the moment. Yet despite all this, there was a peaceful moment on Mobius for somebody to enjoy. Only, there wasn't somebody enjoying this moment. More like… some bodies. Yes, you read correctly, there's more than one person enjoying this peaceful moment on Mobius, two people to be precise and those two people were Wilson the Dog and his gorgeous wife, Mandy Mouse. Shortly after Sonic had come back from Megapolis, the two had left New Mobotropolis and flown over to the marvellously sunny country of Adabat to enjoy a peaceful beach holiday. This was no ordinary holiday though; it was their long overdue honeymoon. Wilson and Mandy had gotten married a good few months back**** and due to many circumstances beyond their control, it had been hard to find a moment to book their honeymoon. They'd finally decided to just have it already since it was long overdue and Mandy was too impatient to have it so they'd booked the holiday, said goodbye to everybody and had flown off to Adabat. They intended to spend a whole week on this honeymoon, just what they needed to relax after all the hard work and battles they'd been going through over the weeks and months. A day had passed already and they'd spent most of yesterday just settling into their

holiday place, which was a house on stilts just above the water. Today was the time to have some fun and relax though at last. Wilson and Mandy had gotten changed into their swimwear and had decided to hit the beach. Mandy was wearing a seaweed green bra and skimpy seaweed green trunks. She looked like an absolute beach beauty in her swimwear and she was all too happy to be showing off her sexy body like this. Wilson was wearing a pair of blue swim-shorts with white pull-strings to tighten them should they need tightening. Mandy was pleased to see Wilson in those shorts. Not only did he look good in them, but Mandy got to see his rather well toned torso and chest. Mandy always adored Wilson's torso and always liked it when she could see him shirtless, provided it was appropriate of course. This just made Wilson flattered to think that he has a nice body since when he was younger; he often took his body shape quite seriously. A little too seriously…but that wasn't a problem for him now since he'd gotten over it thanks to Mandy complimenting his appearance.

Wilson and Mandy ran onto the beach, ecstatic to be out in the sunshine and out on the golden sands that lay before them. It amazed the happy couple on how beautiful the beaches of Adabat could be. The sand that they walked upon was loose and golden, sprinkling naturally off of their feet with every step they took. The sea was pure blue with the sunlight shining off of it, turning the water into reams of sparkling, shining lights that danced with the gentle waves that lapped at the shores of the beach. The sky was pure blue with no clouds at all and the sun shone a radiant, joyous glow, its scorching heat stroking the scenery around it and filling everybody with happiness. Wilson and Mandy were beaming as brightly as the sun itself and they were ready to have a day of fun all to themselves. They set up camp on the beach by setting down a towel each for them to lie on, a deck chair each for them to sit in, a huge umbrella to keep them shaded if they wanted to get out of the sun for a while, a radio that hung off one of the deckchairs so they had something to listen to and their picnic supplies for lunch-time. It was the perfect camp and now the two had set up, they sat on the towels and switched on the radio. The happy, joyous tune of Cliff Richard's smash hit single Summer Holiday droned out from the radio. A perfect song for a scenario like this indeed.

Wilson got out a bottle of sun cream and he squirted some into his hands. He rubbed them together and planted them on Mandy's back. Mandy sighed a relaxing sigh of comfort as Wilson rubbed the cream all over her back. How lovely it felt to have her husband's strong but gentle hands dancing around on her back whilst rubbing in the sun cream. As Wilson did Mandy's back, the mouse squirted sun cream onto her hands and rubbed it onto her arms, legs, belly and face. After a while of rubbing, Mandy was all done and she now shifted around behind Wilson to rub sun cream into his back. Mandy squirted sun cream onto her hands and she rubbed it onto the dog's back. Wilson gave out a satisfied "Oooooh…Aaaah…" as Mandy did her work. Mandy maybe tough as nails but she sure knew how to be gentle. Her hands felt so lovely on his back and a loving tingle surged up his spine as Mandy's gentle hands rubbed in the sun cream. Mandy giggled, pleased to see Wilson was enjoying this. Now Wilson was done, the two had a lie down for a moment to let their sun cream soak in. As they lay down, they held each other's hands and smiled at each other. They were in paradise right now and the best thing was they had each other and nobody to ruin this holiday for them. It was going to be a shame when the honeymoon was over. Still, it was worth waiting for and the happy couple were going to make plenty sure that not a moment of it was wasted.

After their sun cream had finally settled in, Wilson and Mandy opened up a bag and they pulled out some inflatable toys they had brought with them. Mandy had brought a beach ball and Wilson had brought some rubber rings. They blew them up and once they were inflated, they charged into the sea with them. Wilson threw in the rubber rings and the two swam up to wards them, Mandy holding onto the beach ball with her tail. They climbed into the rings and sat in them, floating above the water with their bottoms through the holes in the middle. Mandy threw the ball over to Wilson and Wilson caught it in his hands. Laughing heartily, Wilson threw it back to his wife. Mandy giggled and she reached out to grab the ball. She caught it but it bounced out of her hands and landed in the sea beside her. Mandy giggled at her bad luck and she grabbed the ball. She threw it back at Wilson. This time, the dog missed it and it landed with a splash behind him. Wilson reached out behind him and he grabbed the ball. He threw it back at Mandy and Mandy smacked it back over to him. Wilson caught it and he smacked it

towards Mandy. Mandy caught it and then she purposefully tipped herself backwards so she fell into the water. Wilson just laughed. He liked it when Mandy did something funny for a change. It was often him making Mandy laugh rather than the other way around. Mandy emerged from the surface, soaking wet and laughing like a hyena. Wilson laughed and then he decided to soak himself in return. He tipped himself over backwards and he off of his rubber ring and into the water. Wilson stayed under for a minute and then came up for air, laughing gleefully over the fun he and Mandy were having. The two swam up to each other and then they started playfully splashing each other. Mandy swiped water at Wilson with a flick of her wrist and Wilson placed his hands together and pushed like a snowplough through snow on the water, sending a wave of water over Mandy. Mandy shielded herself with her arms and giggled like a little girl as she was soaked. Mandy was about to throw water at Wilson again but then the two got a big surprise. A big wave start rushing towards them and it swept right over them, sweeping them through the sea and towards the shore. Wilson and Mandy were enjoying this ride though, laughing all the way as the wave took them over to the shore. They washed up on the shore, their rubber toys joining them for the wave had taken them too, and all the two Mobians could do was just laugh at what a ride they'd had from the wave.

A good amount of time had passed and Wilson and Mandy had decided they'd had enough playing in the sea for the moment so they picked up their rubber toys and trotted off back to their set-up. They dried themselves off and then had a lie down for a minute to let the sun's rays dry off the bits they couldn't get, as well as their swimwear. A minute later, Wilson and Mandy got up from their towels and decided to have their picnic. Playing in the sea for a while can build up an appetite after all and the two were practically starving right now so they thought some lunch would be a nice idea. For this picnic, neither of them had brought anything to have for dessert for they were planning on buying an ice-cream later on. There was an ice-cream stall further up on the beach so Wilson and Mandy knew exactly where to go to, to get an ice-cream. They ate their picnic and had a lovely talk whilst having it and then they went over to the ice-cream stall to get an ice-cream each. They both had cones and Wilson had mint ice-cream while Mandy had chocolate,

their favourite flavours respectively. The two tapped their ice-creams together as if having a toast and then they licked away at them, enjoying the marvellous creamy textures, the lovely cool temperature and the sensational flavours that always made ice-cream a joy to eat, especially on a hot day like this. After that, Wilson and Mandy returned to their set-up and were lying down on the towels. They had decided to do something different this time though. Wilson was lying on a towel and he had Mandy lying on top of him. Mandy raised her arms and rested them near Wilson's head while Wilson put his hands on Mandy's belly and gently stroked it, the mouse enjoying every little brush Wilson did with his fingers. Just for a laugh, Wilson playfully inserted his finger into Mandy's belly button (Mobians have those, they're just hidden inside their fur). Mandy just giggled for it kinda tickled her when Wilson did that. Wilson smiled back at Mandy and he ran his fingers up her sides and up to her arms. Mandy put her hands over Wilson's as his hands reached her arms and then she turned over onto her stomach so she was now lying on top of Wilson and facing him directly. She put her hands on the dog's chest, her right hand feeling his heartbeat, and Wilson put his hands on Mandy's hips. They smiled lovingly at each other. The romantic atmosphere in the air was so apparent that you could practically see love hearts floating above them and the arrows of Cupid whizzing over their heads.

"Oh Wilson…this day is going just perfectly." Mandy said softly.

"It certainly is and it's not even over yet." said Wilson "It can only get better from now til the evening."

"Oh indeed." said Mandy, stroking Wilson's face "You know, as long overdue as this honeymoon is…the wait was definitely worth it." she purred in a seductive tone of voice.

"You bet it was worth it gorgeous." said Wilson, stroking Mandy's hair "Every minute of today's been perfect, mainly because I'm here on a beach with the most beautiful woman I've ever had the fortune of marrying."

"Oh Wilson, you're such a sweetheart you know that?" giggled Mandy "You are just so adorable when you get romantic with me and all that."

"Aw thanks." said Wilson "I'm only expressing the love I have for you precious. Wanna know how much I love you?"

"Surprise me handsome." said Mandy with a daring smile on her face.

"I love you more…than life itself." Wilson announced "If I had to choose between dying with you and living without you, I would pick to die with you. Life wouldn't be the same if you weren't in it. You ARE my life Mandy, make no mistake on that."

The look on Mandy's face was enough to show how touched she was by those heartfelt words that Wilson had just said to her. She was so lucky to have a boy as loving as Wilson as her husband. Every romantic thing Wilson said to her just made Mandy feel glad she ever married him.

"Aww Wilson…that was the most beautiful thing you've ever said." said Mandy with a touched expression on her face "I don't know what I've done to make you love me so much but I'm so thrilled you love me that much. I love you more than life itself too Wilson."

"Aw Mandy, that's nice." said a very flattered Wilson "And to think all I ever did was just help you put an end to racism at school to make you love me so much."

"You did more than just that Wilson." said Mandy "You made me feel better about myself and you also were the one who convinced me not to shave all my fur off. Thanks to you, I'm proud of my fur colour. You didn't just help me stop racism at school, you made me proud to be me." she added sweetly.

"Well when you put it that way…guess I did more than what I thought I did to earn your love." said Wilson with a slight chuckle "And speaking of fur…" he added, gently brushing his fingers over Mandy's sides and feeling her smooth purple fur "…I think your fur colour is what makes you so beautiful to me. Purple is, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful colours ever and when you have a woman as beautiful as you with purple-coloured fur, you get a double dose of beautiful. I love your purple fur and believe me when I say I wouldn't want you any other way."

That lovely statement was enough to earn a big loving kiss on the lips from Mandy. The fact Wilson loved her fur so much was the biggest compliment Mandy could ever receive, considering she had been tormented for her fur colour in the past. Wilson embraced his wife and the two had a lovely couple of minutes making out on the towel they were lying on. As their lips locked and their eyes closed, they felt a great sensation building up between them. It was the kind of sensation that only love can bring out, a loving sensation. While they kissed, they stroked each other's fur to add more comfort and delight to each other. Its sweet moments like this that make love such a grand emotion to experience. Wilson and Mandy decided to have a moment to breathe so they broke up the loving kiss but they never kept their eyes off of each other. Mandy's face was curled into a big, loving smile that made her look even more lovely to Wilson.

"That's the nicest thing anybody's ever said about me." she said, very touched and very, very happy about all this.

"You're welcome angel." said Wilson "The most beautiful girl I've ever met deserves the nicest things a man could ever say to a woman I think." he added with a wink of the eye.

"Oh Wilson…" purred Mandy seductively "You're such a sweetie. I think you deserve another kiss…"

So Mandy was about to plant another kiss on Wilson's lips but before she could kiss him, her ears picked up the sounds of voices from nearby. Her ears twitched and rotated in the direction of the voices she was hearing. Mandy looked up from Wilson and she looked over to where the voices were coming from. She spotted the source and she stared at what she had just spotted as if something familiar had just appeared from nowhere. Wilson was a little confused at this.

"Mandy dear, is there something wrong?" asked Wilson.

"Hey Wilson, look over there." said Mandy "I think some familiar faces have shown up on this beach."

Wilson tried to look but it was a little hard with him lying down and Mandy lying on top of him so Mandy sat up and Wilson sat up so he

could see properly. He looked in the direction Mandy was looking in and he saw what she had spotted. To his delight, it was none other than Team Adabat themselves! Further up the beach, Scott the Lynx, his girlfriend Jessica the Cougar, his brother Taran the Lynx and their friend Felix the Peacock were all gathered in a circle and they seemed to be chatting privately to each other. Wilson beamed at the sight of them.

"Well if it isn't Scott and his team?" he said brightly "Should have known we'd come across them at some point, they're natives to Adabat after all."

"Well let's go see them then!" said Mandy excitedly "I'm curious to see what they're up to."

Wilson couldn't see anything wrong with seeing some friends of theirs so he and Mandy got up to their feet and ran off across the sand towards Team Adabat. As they ran to them, Scott heard them coming for his hearing was very good like Mandy's was and he turned around to see who was coming. He was all too happy to see some familiar faces running to him and his team. Jessica, Taran and Felix looked up and they saw Wilson and Mandy running towards them. They were delighted to see members of another Royal Fighter team coming towards them.

"Hi Team Adabat!" cried Mandy happily.

"Hi Team Adabat!" Wilson cried too.

"What a pleasant surprise this is!" said Scott happily "It's Wilson and Mandy!"

"So it is." said Jessica excitedly "Wonder what they're here for then?"

He and the others all stood up to greet the two instantly. The look on their faces showed they were well happy to see some familiar faces, especially since they were Royal Fighters. Wilson and Mandy stopped in front of Team Adabat and the Mobians all exchanged excited hugs and happy chatter. Mandy and Jessica hugged each other.

"How are you doing Jessica?" asked Mandy.

"I'm doing great thanks Mandy!" said Jessica brightly "How's things been with you?"

"I'm on my honeymoon with Wilson." said Mandy, her face a wide grin of excitement "We were just having the time of our lives until we spotted you and we decided to come over and say hi."

"Oh my gosh that's so wonderful!" squealed Jessica excitedly "You two decided to come to our country for your honeymoon?! Let me say you picked the PERFECT place to spend such a romantic holiday!"

"I know!" exclaimed Mandy, her excitement levels so high she was about to burst.

Wilson was chatting with the boys and they all expressed their joy over seeing him again.

"Hey Wilson, how have you and Mandy been recently?" asked Taran, giving the dog a bro-fist.

"We've been fine thanks." said Wilson cheerfully "We're here for our long overdue honeymoon right now and we've been having a good day so far."

"Well I can easily say you picked a great place to have a honeymoon." said Scott approvingly "Adabat's exotic beauty is just perfect for such an occasion."

"I know, we've been loving it so far Scott." said Wilson with a chuckle "I'm glad we came here for our honeymoon, there was nowhere better to have our honeymoon than here."

"It's so wondrous to hear that you and your fair lady are having a most joyous time here." said Felix brightly "And I assure that you will not want to leave here when your honeymoon is over."

"I'm already feeling that way…" laughed Wilson "Maybe if me and Mandy love it so much here we'll move house and live here."

Mandy overheard what Wilson had been saying and she just laughed a hearty little laugh at that statement.

"Oh Wilson, I don't think I could ever leave New Mobotropolis." she giggled "Even if Adabat is nice and beautiful, home is where the heart is as they say."

"Yeah, of course." laughed Wilson.

So now the Mobians had met and greeted each other, they all calmed down their excitement and they all sat down on the sand together.

"So…how's things been with you guys?" asked Mandy curiously.

Team Adabat suddenly looked grave for some reason. It was as if a thundercloud had drifted over their heads and started pouring rain on them. Mandy looked worried. Was there something wrong? She was beginning to wish she hadn't asked now.

"Uh…what's wrong?" asked Mandy "I only asked how things are going."

"We know, and the answer isn't one you'll be expecting, or happy to hear for that matter." said Scott sadly.

"You have arrived at Adabat on a dark day my friends." said Felix, sharing Scott's depressed expression "A very dark day indeed."

"Why, what's wrong?" asked Wilson "Is Ravage attacking again?"

"Surprisingly enough for you two, it's nothing to do with that demon in wolf's clothing." said Jessica "Ravage hasn't been seen since he tried to destroy the country with that super-powered sword thing he had*****."

"Oh, so what's the problem?" asked Mandy "Is it Eggman? Dr. Finitevus? Somebody new entirely?"

"No Eggman involved and we're not sure who this "Dr. Finitevus" guy is but it's not him." said Taran "Let's start from the top. For weeks on end, all the mice of Adabat have been mysteriously

disappearing." he said, his voice grave and serious as if he was telling a horror story.

Mandy's mouth dropped open. No sound came out. She was speechless with horror and her body seemed to freeze as if fear had just come over her like a cold breeze.

"Wh…at?!" she squeaked "All…the…mice…of…Adabat…are… disappearing?!"

"Too right doll-face." said Taran, shaking his head sadly "We'd heard it all. Individuals, couples, even entire families have gone missing! But that's the weird thing, they're all mice. It's as if somebody's targeting them and only them for reasons we currently don't know about."

"Some heartless fiend must have some seething hatred of mice." said Scott "They're the only ones disappearing around here and in a matter of weeks, ALL the mice of Adabat ended up vanishing. We've been trying to find out what's going on and why the mice have been disappearing for weeks now. Just yesterday, we FINALLY found out what's happened to them."

"What? What's happened to them?" asked Mandy, hoping the answer wasn't something like the mice were all dead.

"They've all been kidnapped and are being held captive in a huge, steel fortress that frankly, shouldn't exist since it's not on any map of Adabat and nobody knows about it. It's like it was just…built out of nowhere. It must be new and all since nobody knows about it." explained Jessica "We all investigated the building and found out that the mice have been taken there and are doing slave work for a bunch of rats. The rats all wear uniforms and their emblem seems to be a red rat's head with a chomping mouth. If I'm to guess, the rats are some kind of group and they're forcing the mice to be slaves for them."

Mandy looked as if somebody had just drilled a hole into her skull. She was so shocked at this that she nearly collapsed. Of course though, Mandy was made of strong stuff. It'd take more than a shock to put her on the floor.

"Rats?! RATS?!" screamed Mandy, her rage so apparent you could just about see a vein popping up on her head "All the mice in Adabat have been kidnapped and enslaved…BY RATS?!"

"Wow, I know rats and mice have a rough history together but I didn't think it was THAT bad!" gasped Wilson.

"Well it seems that way." said Felix gravely "The rats are kidnapping mice and enslaving them, and they're kidnapping whole populations of them, making this even worse. One would think they were just gathering all the mice into one building so they can then execute them all."

Mandy just clenched her fists in rage and she gritted her teeth. She was so angry her eyes were twitching and an angry vein stood up on her forehead.

"They…are going…to pay!" snarled Mandy "No disgusting rat gets away with this heinous crime! I'm gonna see to it that all those poor mice get their freedom back you see if I don't!"

"But Mandy, what about our honeymoon?" asked Wilson.

"To hell with it!" snapped Mandy "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few in this case! Every mouse in Adabat has been enslaved and they must be rescued! Our honeymoon will have to wait for the time being. I'm sorry Wilson but I can't let my kind be oppressed like this. They need our help and they need it now."

"I agree Mandy my love." said Wilson "Just because we're on our honeymoon, it doesn't give us an excuse to ignore a call for help. I'm with you all the way on this."

"Ah sweet!" cried Scott happily "You two are gonna help us save all the mice then?"

"Oh hell yeah!" declared Mandy "No rat on Mobius gets away with enslaving a country's mouse population! How many mice do we have to save?"

"1,000." answered Jessica "That's the population of mice in this country."

"Very well, by the power invested in me, I will save all 1,000 mice, even if I die trying!" Mandy swore "But before that though, I need to change. I can't go in battle like this!" she shrieked, looking down at her swimwear.

"Same here." said Wilson "I'd be embarrassed to go on a mission dressed like this."

Scott and Jessica folded their arms and fumed at the two, noticing the irony of the situation in how Wilson and Mandy seem uncomfortable about going into battle in their swimwear whereas they had no problem with it. Mandy and Wilson realized what was up and they giggled nervously.

"Um…no offence guys." said Mandy, chuckling an awkward chuckle.

"Yeah, no offence." said Wilson "We just…prefer to be in uniform when on a mission."

"We understand." said Scott, snickering a little "Now hurry along and get changed then, those mice need our help and fast."

Wilson and Mandy nodded and they ran off back to their set-up. They packed everything up and they ran off back to the house they were staying in. Pity their honeymoon had to be cut short for the moment but it was for a good cause. Mandy just hoped all those poor innocent mice were OK and that they hadn't been hurt too badly by the rats. When Mandy broke into the building, the rats would be going home with very badly bruised faces…

After a minute or two, Wilson and Mandy had packed away their beach gear and changed from their swimwear into their Royal Fighter uniforms, which they had packed in case they needed them. Given how hot Adabat is though, they were wearing vest-tops to go with their uniform trousers instead of their usual long-sleeved shirts to keep cool. It'd be hard to work on a mission if you're feeling too hot to do anything. Wilson and Mandy met back up with Team Adabat and the Mobians had instantly set off to save the mice of Adabat with Team Adabat leading the way. They trekked all the way

across the beach and into the nearby tropical jungles that Adabat had nearby the beaches. Wilson and Mandy had been hoping to tour the jungles at one point on their honeymoon and now they were getting the chance to do so. Pity they weren't having a proper tour though for they were on a mission and they had to trek through the jungle to get to their destination. Once all the mice had been saved from the rats, Wilson and Mandy would get a proper tour of the jungles later. The trek itself was hot and heavy with lots of thick jungle growth sprouting from every inch of the ground they traipsed upon, low hanging vines that were hanging down so low that they practically waiting to snatch somebody by the neck and throttle them and a lot of bumpy, uneven ground made the walk very tiring and very exhausting. Amazingly enough though, Mandy managed to trudge through every inch of the jungle without so much as gasping for breath. Her anger over the rats enslaving a population of mice and her determination to save them all just made her forget how tiring it was walking through the jungle and also give her the stamina necessary to carry on. Wilson however was practically gasping with exhaustion and he looked like he was ready to collapse on the ground and stop to rest. But he could see his wife wasn't willing to stop anytime soon so he forced himself to carry on. Team Adabat didn't seem worn out though since they were used to terrain like this. They live on it after all. After a long, long walk, the Mobians finally stopped to rest and Scott looked out over a bush to see where they were. Wilson collapsed on the ground, panting like a dog on a hot summer's day.

"Gasp…pant…oh thank GOD we've stopped!" he wheezed "I thought I was gonna collapse from…wheeze…exhaustion back there!"

He then wiped beads of sweat off of his forehead and he started downing a bottle of water he'd brought with him for Adabat's hot weather would make anything thirsty work. He drunk half the bottle without even stopping and he panted some more.

"I…hope the rat's…hideout has air conditioning!" he gasped "I'm melting in this tropical heat!"

"Wilson honey, if you can survive a sweltering hot beach then this should be no problem." said Mandy, a slight tinge of annoyance in

her voice.

"Least when you're on a beach you have the wind blowing in your face to cool you down!" retorted Wilson "This sticky, hot jungle is like being trapped in a greenhouse! The heat's just trapped in where it is and there's nowhere for air to come in!"

"Oh stop whining and focus on the mission you moaning mutt!" snapped Mandy "There's mice that need our help and we can't waste any time! The sooner we get to the rat's hideout, the better!"

"Stop bickering back there you two!" shouted Scott, looking over his shoulder at the bickering couple that were just inches behind him "We don't want to catch any unwanted attention do we?"

"No Scott." sighed Mandy in annoyance.

"Besides, we're here." said Scott, pointing over the bush "The rat's hideout is just down there."

Wilson and Mandy were over at the bush in seconds. They looked over the bush only for the eyes to befall upon a pretty well-constructed but sinister looking fortress that stood proudly near a waterfall that streamed down the cliffs that loomed above the fortress. The fortress was clad in highly strong and well made tungsten carbide and it had some lookout posts on all four corners. There was a huge iron door, the only apparent entrance to the building, orange windows and there were steps leading up to the door. The shape of the building was unusual. The walls were all straight but the roof was sloped and then there was a silver rectangle stretching across the roof at the top of the slopes, indicating this was either another floor or some kind of attic. A flag protruded from the top of the roof and it carried the emblem that Jessica described the rats having on their uniforms, a red rat's head with a chomping mouth. Just above the door was the same emblem on the flag only the eyes seemed to have flames flickering inside them. Mandy's stomach churned just looking at the building. She stuck her tongue out.

"Ugh! That's the ugliest building I've ever seen!" she gagged "Just fitting for those disgusting rats!"

"You're telling me." said Scott grimly "I feel sorry I ever found the damn thing. I'd have preferred it if I didn't know this hideous building was there. But since we know the kidnapped mice are there, I can put my distaste aside long enough to save them."

"So why haven't you guys done so already?" asked Mandy.

"You know when you spotted us back on the beach?" said Jessica "We were gathering around to formulate a plan. I whipped up a walking spy-camera and I sneaked it into the fortress so we could see what we were up against. The camera showed us every inch of the building as it trekked through it and once we knew what was in that fortress, we began planning a heist. You…kinda interrupted us so we need to start over again."

"Oh, I'm sorry about that." said Mandy apologetically "Well now me and Wilson can add in some ideas no we're part of this mission."

"Indeed baby cakes." said Taran with a wink "So team, let's formulate that plan shall we?"

"Didn't need to say anything bro." said Scott with a little chuckle.

So the Mobians sat down on the ground and Jessica took out from her cleavage a little round sphere with tiny legs that it could walk with (come on guys, where else could she put it?! She hasn't got pockets and she only wears a bikini and shorts! Her cleavage is the only place she can store that thing!). It was the walking spy camera she had made. Jessica was a mechanic in her spare time much like other Royal Fighters such as Tails the Fox or Kari the Rat and she had made the camera herself for missions like this. She held the camera in-between her index finger and thumb and she turned it on. The camera displayed a big holographic image of its findings and recordings, allowing Wilson and Mandy to see just where the camera had walked around when sneaking in the fortress.

"OK then, according to what the camera picked up," began Jessica as she watched the film footage play "The fortress has four lookout towers, each one on each corner of the building. There's no getting in without getting spotted for someone from any corner will spot us. The lookouts are armed with sniper rifles so they'll hit anyone from a

long way away. No matter how well hidden we are, there's no getting past without getting spotted."

"So how do we get past the look outs then?" asked Wilson.

"Felix will fly around the building and throw a smoke bomb at each of them." explained Jessica "He already has the bombs on him now, nicely stored away in his tail feathers." she added with a wink at the peacock who sat beside her.

Felix then proceeded to take out the bombs and present them.

"You'll be amazed what a peacock can fit in his tail feathers." said Felix with a wink.

"Cool." said Mandy "Anything else?"

"There's guards at the door but we can deal with them." said Jessica "I'll come out and pretend I need help with something. You know what men are like when it comes to a dame in distress." she added slyly before continuing "Once they and the lookouts are down, we will break through that shaft," she paused to point at a place on the building, which was a ventilation grate bolted into the wall just around the left side "Once we're all inside, we have many shafts to crawl through. The one that leads to the imprisoned mice is that one there," she paused to point at the shaft they had to take in order to reach the mice "But the room they're in is locked with a code on the outside. The camera picked up the code as it spied on the person putting it in. Listen carefully, the code to that door is 8643-5295. Got it?" she asked.

"8643-5295, got it Jessie." said Mandy with a thumbs up "I won't forget a code as distinct as that."

"Excellent." said Jessica "The door has guards but it too but as if we need to worry about them. You know what guards for the villains are like, they're always useless." she said with a little chuckle "Mandy, I think you can handle this job on your own. They are YOUR kind after all so you should have the honour of saving those poor mice."

"Aw thank you." said Mandy, thrilled that she would be the one to

save the mice "So what will you lot be doing then?"

"Stirring up a racket to keep the rabble off your back." said Jessica "We'll catch everybody's attention by attacking some guards and maybe even sounding the alarm. You'll be clear to get the mice out and then mission accomplished."

"Awesome!" cheered Mandy "Those mice are as good as free! Quick question, who's the leader of this group? I like to punch the man in charge after all."

"Dunno." said Jessica "Didn't find that out. We might end up doing so as we go ahead with this heist. So are you ready?"

"Definitely!" said Mandy, slipping on her knuckle attachments "Let's rile up those rats!"

"Now you're talking my language!" laughed Taran "Wilson, you sure picked a great gal to marry didn't ya?"

"Oh yes. Oh yes indeed." said Wilson, smiling dreamily at his tough but beautiful wife "Her tough attitude makes me so glad I married her. It makes her so cool to me."

Mandy blushed with pleasure at that remark. Now that the plan had been formulated, it was time to execute it. Scott peered over the bushes to get another look at the fortress. Everything was going as normal. Now was a good time to execute the plan. He signalled for Jessica to make her move with a swipe of his arm. Jessica obliged and she ran out towards the fortress. The moment she arrived at the fortress, she was instantly greeted with a pair of guns being point at her. Jessica raised her hands as the guards pointed their guns at her. The guards were a pair of rats, one grey and one brown, and they wear wearing the uniforms that Jessica had described earlier.

"Hold it right there sunshine!" snarled the grey rat "This is private territory! Leave here at once or we WILL shoot you!"

"P-please. D-don't shoot." begged Jessica in a fake, whimpering tone of voice "I'm very sorry about this. I didn't know this place was private. Forgive my intrusion."

"We'll let you off if you clear off brat-face!" snarled the brown rat.

"I'll go but please, I was wondering if you could help me." said Jessica "I'm lost and I'm trying to find the beach. Please could you help me?"

"Sorry girlie, we don't have time for that." sighed the grey rat "But I'll give ya the directions…"

As the rat was talking to Jessica, Felix swooped out of the jungle and flew towards the fortress. The lookouts spotted him instantly but before they could shoot him, Felix was over the fortress in a millisecond (he can fly very fast) and he threw all four smoke bombs at all four lookouts. The bombs exploded and the smoke instantly knocked the lookouts out, their coughing and spluttering catching the attention of the rat guards at the door below.

"Hey? What's goin' on?" asked the grey rat.

"A break-in." said Jessica, summoning green energy to her hands.

She then punched the two rats and knocked them clean out with that one single energy-enhanced punch each. The guards collapsed onto the ground in a daze and Jessica smiled smugly at them.

"Like I said, guards are always useless." she sneered.

Felix flew back over to the others and he gave the thumbs up sign, meaning that the cost was clear and they could get involved now. Scott, Taran, Wilson and Mandy emerged from the bushes, ran out of the jungle and sprinted down to the fortress that contained all the kidnapped mice. Once everybody was down at the fortress, Scott and Jessica ran over to the grate that was their one way inside without being spotted. They both summoned energy to their hands and they fired energy spears at the grate, destroying it instantly. There was now a gaping hole for the Mobians to crawl through and get inside the ventilation shafts. Mandy went in first and she began crawling through the shaft on her hands and knees. The shafts were small and there was no standing up in them so they had to crawl on their hands and knees.

"Remember Mandy, the shaft you need to take is on the right once you get to the end of this one." said Jessica.

"Got it." said Mandy, crawling off as fast as she could.

She was keen to rescue all the mice after all and she wasn't going to dawdle. She was going to get on with her task and fast. The others followed behind her in single file with Wilson behind Mandy, Scott behind Wilson, Jessica behind Scott, Felix behind Jessica and Taran behind Jessica. As they crawled through the shaft, Wilson could hardly help but sneak a look at Mandy's bum. As much as he hated sneaking looks at Mandy's more private areas, he couldn't really help himself in this situation. He just had to make sure Mandy didn't notice. After a while of crawling, they reached the end of the shaft and Mandy was about to turn right and crawl off to find the mice. Before she could set off, Wilson grabbed her tail and stopped her a moment.

"You be careful out there sweetheart." said Wilson worriedly "I couldn't bear to think of anything bad happening to you on our honeymoon."

"Wilson honey, please don't worry about me." said Mandy sweetly, putting a hand on her husband's shoulder "I'll be fine. You know I will be."

"I know, but still. Be careful and save all those mice." said Wilson.

"I will handsome." said Mandy "You be safe too. I don't know what I'd do if I saved all the mice and ended up finding out that I'm leaving this place minus my husband."

"I'll be fine angel, honest I will." said Wilson "Me and Team Adabat will provide an excellent distraction and we'll escape alive."

"I know." said Mandy "Here's a kiss for good luck."

With that said, she gave Wilson a small but loving kiss on the lips for luck. Wilson enjoyed the little kiss and as their lips separated, the dog just prayed this kiss wouldn't be their last. Mandy waved goodbye to Wilson and Team Adabat and she crawled off down the

right shaft, heading off to where the captive mice were being held. As soon as Mandy disappeared down the shaft, Team Adabat and Wilson turned to the left and headed down the shaft to no place in particular. Any place would be a good place to create a ruckus in a tight-security fortress like this and because Jessica had the spy-camera that had seen everything, she know exactly where to go and what everything was. What she didn't know unfortunately is that their actions weren't going unnoticed, even in the ventilation shafts. You see, the rats are SO security nervy that even the shafts had security cameras in them! Given how dark the shafts were and the fact the cameras were just tiny little orbs disguised as rivets in the metal floors of the shafts, Jessica couldn't possibly have spotted them, even with her spy-camera. She just overlooked them as simple rivets. Because of this ingenious security method, the Mobians had been spotted and over in the monitoring room, the very room that sees every single thing that the security cameras pick up, some rats could see Wilson, Mandy and Team Adabat crawling through the shafts. They didn't sound the alarm yet for they knew that their leader knew how to deal with things like this. So they pressed a button on the control pad that called for the man in charge of this group. A few moments later, a dark figure walked into the room, keeping to the shadows as he walked by. The monitor room was alight with a red glow from the TV screens that displayed security footage picked up by the cameras and the light only stretched as far as the chairs the two security rats were sitting in. The scenery behind them was masked in darkness and the rat who had just entered the room was keeping to the shadows, making his very presence strange and eerie.

"You called for me boys?" the rat hissed, his voice sinister and gravelly.

"Yes sir, Mr. Benedict sir." said one rat who had a Cockney accent and maroon fur "The vent cams have picked up intruders crawling through the shafts. One of them's a mouse too."

"A mouse? But I thought we captured all the mice of this country!" cried the lead rat, name apparently Benedict.

"I don't think the mouse in the shafts is from here sir." said the other rat, his upper lip buried under a thick, curly moustache and his fur a

dirty brown colour "Look at that awful purple fur she has. None of the mice that live in Adabat have purple fur." he added with a point to the monitor that displayed Mandy crawling through the shaft that led to the imprisoned mice.

Benedict strode forward to get a closer look. As he stepped into the light that shone from the security monitors, one could see that he was a grey-furred rat and that he had thick, black hair that was suave in style and curled a little in the front. He had sinister black eyebrows perched over his red eyes, a long face and very furry, pointed cheeks. He was dressed smartly too, wearing a long black trenchcoat that accompanied a white shirt and black tie, black trousers and black shoes that he also wore. He looked like a shrewd businessman. He had an lit cigarette clamped between his finger and thumb and he popped it in his mouth to chew on while he looked at the secutrity monitors. Benedcit's eyes swept over the monitors and they widened in surprise when he saw Mandy crawling through the shafts. His eyes narrowed down to sinister slits that suggested somebody was in for the chop. He took the cigarette out of his mouth and blew out a puff of dirty, nicotene-stenched smoke that made the guards cough a little for the smell made them sick. Benedict's face twisted into a smile that was fiendish and yet oddly calm for someone who's got intruders in his base.

"At long last, my beautiful Mandy returns." he purred "I've longed to see that feisty little belle again. I do hope she's lost some of that spunk she had back in High School, she'd make a fine slave for us."

The guards were amazed at what they'd heard.

"You...know that purple mouse?" gapsed the maroon rat.

"Yes." said Benedict, popping the cigarette back in his mouth and talking through his teeth as he held it between them "Me and her were High School students once and I loved her from the start. So beautiful, such a perfect body and such an attractive personality...for some reason she didn't seem to fancy me and kept running off with that orange-furred mutt I often picked on. She even dared to punch me as I began to bully that dog. For a girl, Mandy sure can punch let me tell you." he finished with a slight scowl as he remembered the punch Mandy had given him that day.

"She must be dangerous!" cried the moustached rat "We must kill her immediately!"

Benedict pinched the rat on his neck with a pair of sharp, killer claws.

"You will not lay a finger on the brat. She's mine." snarled Benedict "Besides, she's a mouse. Any mouse will suffice in our slave camps remember?"

"Yes sir!" shrieked the moustached rat.

"What about the others?" asked the maroon rat "What should we do about them guv?"

Benedict gave the rat an evil glare that could send a witch crying home to her mummy.

"Kill them." he growled "They're not mice, they're surplus to our cause."

"Right away sir." said the maroon rat "I'll give the orders now. What will you do?"

"Deal with my little Mandy." said Benedict with a sinister grin "Maybe even make her submit to me. A woman as beautiful as her should be on my side, even if she is a filthy little mouse." he finished, taking the cigarette out and blowing smoke into the air.

With that said, Benedict left the room and the guards were on their own to just give out orders to the armed guards on patrol...kill the intruders. Wilson and Team Adabat were in for one intense situation once they exited the shafts...

Meanwhile, Mandy had reached her destination and she peered through the grate in the shaft. She was above a long corridor and at the end of the corridor there was a huge steel door with a coded lock beside it. On the other side of that door was the entire mouse population of Adabat. Surprisingly enough, there were no guards around like Jessica said there would be. Mandy couldn't understand

it. Why was such an important room left unguarded? Well unbeknownst to her, the guards had all been called to kill Wilson and Team Adabat. Every guard in the building was going to commit the deed so Mandy didn't have any guards to deal with here. Mandy shrugged, praising her good luck and she punched the grate out of its place. It landed on the floor with a heavy clang and Mandy jumped down out of the shaft. She looked around the corridor to make sure the coast was clear. She was the only one around at this moment. Mandy smiled to herself and she ran over to the door.

"Well, this is pretty straight forward. Guess the rats aren't that good at keeping an eye on things." said Mandy "I'll feel mighty foolish though if this turns out to be an obvious trap. Well, this trap will not catch this mouse..."

She knelt down by the door and started punching in the code.

"Now then. 8-6-4-3..." she murmured as she put in the first bit of the code. She paused for a minute and tried to remember the other half.

"Uh...what was it again? Ah ha!" Mandy cried as she remembered the other half.

She typed it in and murmured "5-2-9..." as she began typing.

Then suddenly, a dirty pair of hands shot out from behind her and closed around her mouth and neck before she could type in the last number! Mandy squealed a muffled squeal of shock as she was grabbed and hurled onto her feet. Mandy wrestled in the grasp of the person who'd just grabbed her and she managed to break free by kicking her grabber in the shin, spinning around and then punching him down onto the floor.

"How dare you grab me like that!" snarled Mandy "Nobody grabs me and gets away..."

She paused as she watched her grabber groan in pain as he clutched his face and tried to get back up. It was Benedict. He had caught up with Mandy and had tried to kidnap her but the tomboy mouse had proven too tough for him. Now he was lying on the floor clutching his face in pain. Benedict sat up and uncovered his face,

his red eyes fixed on Mandy and his lips a sick, psychoitc smile that made him look crazy. Mandy gasped in horror but horror quickly turned to anger as her eyes narrowed into a scowl and her teeth clenched in rage.

"YOU!" she snarled, pointing sharply at him.

"Yes my lovely Mandy, it is I, Benedict Rat, in the flesh once again." purred Benedict, standing back up and smiling cooly at the furious Mandy "Long time no see isn't it love...?"

Footnotes:

*** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 155-156**

**** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 157-158**

***** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 159**

****** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 98-99**

******* See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius: The Sword of Elemental Power**

Honeymoons and Rats 2

Arc 20: Honeymoons and Rats

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 159-160

Part 2: Trouble with Rats

What had been a pleasant day on the beach had quickly turned sour for fellow Royal Fighter Mandy Mouse. First off, she ended up hearing from the local Team Adabat that the mouse population of Adabat had been captured and imprisoned within a fortress that nobody knew about, then she ended up hearing that rats were apparently behind the whole thing which made things even worse for poor Mandy and now she, her husband Wilson and Team Adabat are breaking into the fortress to rescue the mice. It had been an easy mission so far but they had been spotted by the leader of the group, Benedict Rat. Benedict had ordered the termination of Wilson and Team Adabat while he himself had gone to get Mandy. Mandy had found where the imprisoned mice were being held and before she could get them out, Benedict had seized her and tried to take her away but Mandy broke free of his grasp and ended up flooring him. She soon got a shock when she realized who she was up against though. Benedict was an old enemy of hers from High School and just seeing him again made Mandy want to strangle the evil rat. Benedict stood before Mandy, straightening his tie conceitedly and smiling smugly at the furious mouse.

"YOU!" snarled Mandy, pointing a finger at Benedict like a pistol.

"Yes my lovely Mandy, it is I, Benedict Rat. In the flesh once again." purred Benedict, his face calm and collected and his smile a sick, psychotic grin that spread out over his face "Long time no see isn't it love?"

"It's been a VERY long time and yet I feel like it hasn't been long enough." said Mandy coldly "Haven't seen you since the day I punched you for picking on Wilson. Pity that I'm now staring at you

again Benedict, and just when I was beginning to forget about you too."

"It's lovely to see you too Mandy." sneered Benedict, taking in Mandy's insults and practically skewering it for it didn't seem to affect him in anyway "I must say, you've grown more beautiful in my absence. I like that…"

"Stop hitting on me you filthy little scumbag!" snapped Mandy "I made it clear since the day I met you that I don't like you in any way and that only boys I like are allowed to compliment my looks!"

"Whatever." said Benedict "You're just denying the fact that my charms appeal to you in someway…" he added with a crude smile that suggested he was just taunting Mandy to make her mad.

"Benedict, you're about as appealing to me as what somebody flushes down the toilet!" growled Mandy "You're a sick, disgusting little rat and I'll be all too happy to flatten your face into mush! You're vain, arrogant, conceited and above all else, a bully! You bullied Wilson simply because he was weaker than you at the time and I would not stand up for it! I gave you what you deserved that day and yet now, I'm itching to do it all over again!"

"Aaah, that annoying, tomboy spunk of yours hasn't faded at all Mandy! I like that, it'll be more enjoyable when I get you to swear fealty to me." crowed Benedict, smiling at the thought of having Mandy by a collar and chain and have the mouse grovelling at his feet.

"As if I'd succumb to vermin like you!" said Mandy threateningly "Oh and here's something to make your heartache. I'm married now, to Wilson! The very dog you bullied back in High School! What do you think to THAT you scum heap?" she added with a gloating smirk on her face.

Benedict looked like Mandy had just told them the world was coming to an end. The very fact that Mandy was now married to Wilson just made him gape at her.

"You…married that yellow-bellied sapsucker of a dog?!" gasped

Benedict.

"Yep." sneered Mandy "Now maybe you'll stop lusting over me since there's no landing me now. But enough on that, what the hell are YOU doing here anyway?" she demanded "Are you part of this group?"

"I am." said Benedict, smiling as if he was proud of it "I'm even the LEADER of this group of rats. But I'm not the man behind this operation, oh no indeed. I'm merely one of the cogs in this enormous machine that operates around the world."

Mandy looked confused.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Every rat on Mobius has banded together to form an organization known as "The Exterminators". We're so called because we exterminate the vermin of this world that are the mice." explained Benedict "The man behind the organization is the one behind the whole cause of The Exterminators and his identity shall remain anonymous. This group is just one of three groups all working for the organization. Our goal: to enslave or exterminate every last mouse on Mobius!"

Mandy felt sick hearing this revelation.

"You sick little…why would you do that?!" shrieked Mandy.

"The mice think they're so superior to us rats and we're gonna show them how wrong they are!" snapped Benedict "We've feuded for years now and it's about time we put this petty rivalry to rest!"

"Well you could have done it peacefully you idiot!" screeched Mandy.

"As if you mice would be willing to settle our rivalry peacefully!" retorted Benedict "They can either submit to us or die, simple as that!"

That did it. Mandy thundered towards Benedict and she punched him directly in the face, her knuckle attachments making the punch

all the more harder. The punch felt like being hit by a sack of rocks to Benedict. He was gobsmacked on her hard Mandy could punch. This was a woman who did not mess around and he knew it. Benedict was thrown on the floor by the punch and he tried to pick himself up but Mandy grabbed him by the coat and slammed him against the wall. She pinned him to the wall and gritted her teeth, growling like a dog at the pinned rat.

"You tell your boss to terminate this organization and leave the mice alone or so help me I'll break your skull!" snarled Mandy "And I mean it, I seriously will do it!"

"You wouldn't!" Benedict blurted, assuring himself that Mandy was bluffing.

"Do I bleeding sound like I'm bluffing?!" roared Mandy, drawing her arm back and preparing to let Benedict have it in the kisser with her fist "I'm gonna give you ten seconds to do as you're told and if you don't do it, I'll break every last piece of your face!"

"You'll drop that attitude when I tell you this Mandy." sneered Benedict, a cool smile spreading out on his face that made Mandy feel uncomfortable "I spotted Wilson and four kids crawling through the ventilation shafts earlier and I've ordered their termination. Once they leave the shafts, they'll be sprayed with laser shots and they'll all be dead! And given Wilson's your husband now, you wouldn't want to lose him would you?"

Mandy couldn't believe her ears. Benedict knew about the others?! And he had ordered the guards to kill them?! That might explain why this door was unguarded, all the guards had gone to kill Wilson and Team Adabat! Mandy slammed Benedict against the wall again.

"You monster! Call off the guards or I'll kill you myself!" shouted Mandy.

"You surrender yourself and I'll call off the guards!" snapped Benedict "I'll let your husband and those four other Mobians live if you surrender yourself to me. Their lives are in YOUR hands now Mandy. What will it be? Spare me and I'll spare the others? Or we all die?"

Mandy could feel herself tensing up in rage and she was about ready to flatten Benedict's face into a pancake. She drew her fist back and aimed it squarely at the rat's face, itching to punch him in the noggin. But Mandy knew deep in her heart that it wouldn't help matters at all. If she killed Benedict now, it wouldn't stop the guards from killing her friends and husband. Mandy was sure that Wilson and Team Adabat would beat the guards but what if they failed? What if the guards got lucky and managed to kill them? Then Adabat would lose its heroes and Mandy would lose her husband and if she lost Wilson, then who knew what would become of her. Wilson had helped Mandy in her darkest hour when she was a kid; she didn't think she'd be able to cope with his loss. Not to mention she very nearly lost him once during her time in Megapolis to Marik the Martian, she wasn't going to lose him for real. And she certainly wasn't going to cost the lives of Team Adabat. The R.F.S. had lost two teams to the Devatrons, they couldn't afford to lose another team. Mandy had no choice but to surrender. Then Mandy suddenly had an idea. It was a risky gambit but at this point, the mouse was all too desperate to save her friends. She lowered her arm but she kept her serious expression on.

"Alright Benedict, we'll compromise." said Mandy calmly "You call off the guards, and THEN I'll surrender. I won't surrender unless you spare my husband and Team Adabat's lives."

Benedict looked surprised to hear that but he wasn't going to abide to such an offer, especially since he was a lot smarter than Mandy gave him credit for.

"Mandy, how stupid do you think I am?" he snorted "If I call off the guards, you'll attack me!"

"And if YOU don't call off the guards then how do I know you won't go back on your word and leave them to it once I surrender?" snapped Mandy "If you want, you can make sure I can't attack you once the guards are ordered to stop."

Benedict smiled a slimy smile at the mouse. He knew exactly what he was going to do about this.

"OK then Mandy, put me down and I'll make sure that you can't

attack me when I order the guards to surrender." he said.

Mandy obeyed for this was part of her plan. She had to make sure that Benedict was totally fooled by this and that he did exactly as she wanted him to do so she was going to let Benedict do what he liked to her. Mandy let Benedict go and the rat pulled out a pair of handcuffs he had stored in his coat (he likes to keep things on him in case of emergencies. He's quite a contingency man). He forced Mandy's hands behind her back and snapped on the handcuffs. Mandy didn't say or do anything, she just allowed herself to be cuffed. Benedict seemed disturbingly happy about doing this, especially since it was the girl he always loved he was putting the cuffs on. Now Mandy was handcuffed and surely helpless to do anything to him, Benedict pulled out a communicator he had stored in his pocket and he spoke into it.

"Attention guards, this is Benedict Rat." he said "I am ordering you all to stand down, repeat: stand down. Your given order is cancelled, repeat: cancelled. Return to your ranks."

Mandy just smiled, pleased to see her plan was working. Now Benedict had done his part, she could deck him and save the mice, knowing that Wilson and Team Adabat were perfectly safe. What a brilliant plan this had been! The handcuffs certainly weren't going to hinder the plan in anyway, it would take more than handcuffs to stop a feisty tomboy like Mandy. Benedict put the communicator in his pocket and he turned to face the mouse.

"I've done my part of the compromise, now will you do yours?" he asked "Do you surrender?"

"Yes" lied Mandy "So what's next for me then? Will I be a slave for you disgusting rats then?"

"No, you're to beautiful to be a mere slave my pet." purred Benedict "A woman like you should be working alongside me was we enslave or exterminate the mice population. I might even force you to divorce Wilson and marry me instead, you will make a fine wife for me." he purred, his voice making Mandy's skin crawl.

Mandy wanted to throw up just at the very thought of marrying a

slimy rat like Benedict. She kept it cool though and didn't do anything to him.

"And what of my friends and my husband?" asked Mandy curiously.

Benedict just smiled a devil's smile at the handcuffed mouse.

"They're waiting for a firing squad." he sneered.

"WHAT?!" shrieked Mandy, her face contorting with horror "You sneaky little rat! I thought we agreed!"

"I'm a rat, it's customary for me to lie and deceive." said Benedict casually "That communicator I spoke into wasn't even switched on so the guards won't have received my order. I did that just to fool you into thinking I was sparing your friends and husband. With Wilson gone, you'll have no choice but to be mine now and once you're mine, you will be the most loyal wife a man can ask for!" he crowed, cackling menacingly.

"Over my dead body!" roared Mandy, throwing herself onto her back on the floor.

She tucked her legs up to her chest and positioned her feet down. She slipped her handcuffed hands over her legs so her hands were now back in front of her and able to be used again. Mandy stood back up and she gave Benedict a terrific uppercut to the face that sent him staggering backwards. The uppercut caused Benedict to bang his head on the wall, which in turn knocked him clean out. Mandy just scowled at Benedict, disgusted that she'd fallen for his obvious trick and she chomped on her handcuffs. Mandy had very strong teeth, a trademark of mice all over, so a pair of handcuffs was no match for her strong bite. She chewed straight through the chain, freeing her hands and just leaving her with the cuffs still clamped around her wrists. She'd get them off later, she had to save Wilson and Team Adabat before the guards killed them. The mice, as reluctant as Mandy was to admit it, would have to wait. She was not leaving this dodgy hideout with five dead bodies on her hands, she had to run over and help them quickly.

"I've gotta help Wilson and Team Adabat!" cried Mandy "They'll be

killed if I don't help them! I hope I can find them…"

Her stomach began to ache with worry as she belted off down the corridor and ran off to try and find Wilson and Team Adabat. Knowing them, they might still be in the ventilation shaft or they might be out in a corridor somewhere. Mandy knew she had to find them fast or they'd be shot. As much as she knew they could defend themselves and take care of a tough situation, They had no idea that guards were coming for them so they'd have no chance against them. She had to find them before it's too late…

Meanwhile, Wilson the Dog and Team Adabat, consisting of Scott the Lynx, Jessica the Cougar, Felix the Peacock and Taran the Lynx were still in the shafts. They had been crawling for a long time, the lot of them now beginning to get aching knees from crawling around on them and on a hard steel surface for a lengthy period of time. They hadn't found a good place to jump out and cause a ruckus in order to distract the guards yet. This building was quite big and searching through it could often be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. As they crawled along, Wilson couldn't help but wonder how things were going with Mandy so far. He hoped his dear wife was doing well, he couldn't bear the thought of Mandy in trouble, especially since she was alone and he was presumably far away from her right now. As much as Mandy could take care of herself, Wilson couldn't help but worry about her when they were separated. He liked to make sure that Mandy was in his sights as much as possible just to make sure she's safe. Just behind him, Scott was getting visibly annoyed at this moment.

"Ugh…Jessica, you know this place top to bottom thanks to your spy-camera." he moaned "Are we close to any good areas to stir up trouble?!"

"For heaven's sake Scott, keep your voice down!" hissed Jessica, who was just behind him "And in answer to your question, just be patient. This is a big building you know. It took my camera two hours to get around it all so who knows how long it'll take us to get around it?"

"Well I hope we get out of here soon, my knees are killing me!" whined Scott "And it's cramped in here, I'm not feeling very comfortable in here right now."

It maybe hard to believe but Scott is a little bit claustrophobic. While he wasn't one to panic in a confined space, he did often feel uncomfortable if he was in a confined space for too long. He was still able to keep his cool and not fret over this though but Scott would much prefer to be outside in the open then in a cramped ventilation shaft. Jessica understood this and just to comfort her boyfriend, she decided to reassure him they weren't going to be much longer.

"We shouldn't be much longer sweetie." said Jessica "I'm sure we're pretty near now."

"I hope so." said Wilson, answering for Scott "I could do with a stretch of the legs I could."

"We all could." said Felix, who was crawling behind Jessica "Being on your knees for so long can truly bring out unpleasant pains in them."

"You got that right buddy." said Taran, who was crawling behind Felix "I wonder how Mandy's doing now? I bet she's already at her destination and is freeing those mice right now."

"It won't do her much good if there's guards to stop her." said Wilson, his stomach tightening "Which is why we need to create a distraction big enough to bring them all over. All the mice freely escape if there's no guards to stop them."

"Exactly." said Taran "Say Wilson, can you see anything ahead of you?"

Wilson looked ahead and he saw some light seeping through an open square gap in the floor just a few sections ahead of him. It was almost like creeping through darkness for so long only to finally come into the light.

"Hey, there's some light coming in out there." said Wilson "We're near another room I think."

"Let's hope this room is one we want to end up in." sighed Scott "Wilson, you have a look for us will you?"

Given Wilson was upfront, he was the only one who could have a look out for them. The Mobians reached the gap in the floor and Wilson stuck his head out of it. He was looking, upside-down of course, out of the gap and he could see they were in a corridor that stretched on for quite a while, indicating that they still had much longer to crawl through before they reached another room. But that was the least of Wilson's worries now. As he looked around, he could see a bunch of guards marching through the corridors and coming towards him. They were all rats dressed in combat fatigues and helmets with visors. They carried heavy-duty laser guns with large barrels and the very bulk of them suggested they packed quite a punch in terms of firepower. The guards spotted Wilson immediately and they all primed their guns. Wilson knew they were going to shoot so he took his head back up and he turned to face the others.

"Well…I've found the guards!" he squeaked "And they're about ready to shoot at us!"

"Well let's get out there and give them what for!" yelled Scott, summoning energy to his hands and getting ready for a fight.

What followed this was a terrible sound as laser shots punched their way through the steel floor of the shaft and whizzed past the Mobians, narrowly missing them by millimetres. The guards had been given orders to kill Wilson and Team Adabat and they weren't going to wait for them to come out of the shaft, they were going to destroy the shaft if it meant killing the Mobians. Wilson and Team Adabat threw themselves onto their sides as laser shots blasted through the shaft, hoping to snag one of them. It would be suicide to try and get out of the shaft with all those laser shots going off at once. One was surely going to hit them if they tried to run for it. They didn't dare move in fear of getting hit by the lasers. They were completely trapped in the shaft, unable to move and pinned against the wall with laser shots shooting out in front of them. There was no telling what would happen if they got hit by the lasers but judging from how they were punching through metal as if it was a sheet of paper, they were bound to be deadly. The shooting went on for a

while and they fired so many rounds into the shaft that the entire floor gave way, causing the Mobians to fall straight through it and out into the corridor with a thud. The amount of holes punched into the floor had weakened it considerably so a cave in was inevitable. Wilson and Team Adabat were up on their feet in no time and they all backed against the wall as the guards prepared to shoot them all.

"Hold it right there intruders!" snarled the guards "You have been caught trespassing in our hideout and we have orders to kill you all! Make this easy for yourselves and stay where you are. We'll make your deaths quick and painless."

"I highly doubt a laser shot's gonna be painless." said Wilson, his head raining with sweat as he tried to find a way out of this mess.

"Well guards, we have something to say about that." said Scott smoothly "Me and Jessica have some shooting skills of our own. Perhaps you'd like to see them."

Without warning, Scott and Jessica both swiped their already glowing hands and the guards were swept off their feet by a shower of energy spears that flew straight into them and sent them crashing into the wall. The guards groaned in pain as they were slammed into the wall like a bunch of footballs being kicked at it and they all slid down onto the floor, dazed and in excruciating pain. Scott and Jessica destroyed their guns with a quick shower of energy spears so the guards couldn't try and shoot them again. Now that was done, they dusted their hands off and smiled at each other.

"It's so fortunate for us that the guard always jabbers instead of just shooting already." Scott sneered cockily "One day, they'll learn their lesson."

"I hope they never do." giggled Jessica "Just makes it easier for us to take them down and gives us a chance to dodge death."

"We were lucky that time." gasped Wilson, wiping sweat off his forehead "If the guards didn't talk and just fired, we'd be dead already. Let's hope our luck doesn't wear out."

"Um, excuse me my friends." said Felix who was looking up the

corridor and had noticed something "I hate to deliver news of the distressing kind…but more guards are coming our way!"

Surely enough, more guards were running around the corners of the corridor just further up from where the Mobians were and they were running towards them, their weapons in hand and ready to fire. Wilson drew out his spinning blade weapon and he threw it at the guards, the deadly double-bladed weapon spiralling through the air like a boomerang towards them. The guards instantly freaked out and they tried to turn and run. Some of the guards at the front ended up getting slashed across the backs by the weapon and they dropped dead instantly from the damage done to them. The blade boomeranged back towards Wilson and he caught it. Any guards that were lucky enough not to have been hit by the weapon turned around and began firing at the Mobians. Wilson threw the spinning blade at them again, the guards freaking out as the lethal, double-bladed weapon began hurling towards them like a killer boomerang. The guards threw themselves onto the floor just to dodge the weapon. This gave the Mobians the perfect opportunity to run for their lives. Team Adabat ran off whereas Wilson waited for his weapon to return to him. The weapon spun back towards him and he caught it in his hands. Wilson then scampered off after Team Adabat, the guards getting to their feet the moment he left and they ran off after them. They had no chance of catching up to them though for they were slower than the Royal Fighters and pretty far behind them already. Wilson and Team Adabat turned a corner and darted down another corridor as fast as they could, hoping to lose the guards.

"Well at least we've gotten their attention just as planned!" cried Scott as he ran for it.

"Yeah…puff…but how did…pant…they know…where we here?" gasped Taran, speaking between pants as he ran alongside his brother.

"I have no idea." said Scott "Do you know Jessica?"

"If I'm to guess, the ventilation shafts must have had some hidden camera that's so well-hidden even my spy-camera didn't spot it!" Jessica called over to the lynx "Very clever of them rats if that's the

case!"

That made Wilson feel like he was going to trip over in alarm for a terrible thought crept into his head upon hearing Jessica theorize that possibility.

"Wait a minute…if the guards know we're here…then they know Mandy's here too!" he shrieked "They'll be after her as well! I've gotta help her"

He screeched to a halt and he ran back up the way he had run. As much as he knew Mandy could take care of herself, he wasn't taking any chances now. Mandy would be in trouble and he had to save her. He was not losing his wife anytime soon, especially in a place like this. Team Adabat stopped running and they watched as Wilson belted back up the corridor.

"Oy! Wilson where are you going?!" cried Scott furiously.

"I have to save Mandy!" Wilson called back "She won't have a chance on her own against those guards!"

"But there's guards coming that way!" Felix cried out "You can't go that way, you'll be shot!"

Wilson stopped for a minute and looked back over at Team Adabat with a confident smile on his face.

"You forget, I have a weapon that gets them running scared." he gloated.

He continued to run back up the corridor. Scott sighed in annoyance, thinking Wilson was being mighty foolish and he ran off after him to give him extra cover. The rest of his team followed in hot pursuit. Of course, running back they way they had come meant that they were now confronted by the guards they had just been fighting but Wilson cleared the way by throwing his spinning blade at them and causing them to dive for cover. Now the guards were out the way, Wilson and Team Adabat were free to run down the corridor with no obstacles in their way. Unfortunately, the guards picked themselves up and they started running after them again. While they

were pretty far away, they began shooting at the Royal Fighters and much to their chagrin, they had a pretty good aim so the shots were pretty much whizzing past their heels and nearly hitting them. The Royal Fighters turned a corner, meaning that the shower of lasers was away from them for the moment and they ran off further down the corridor. As they ran for it, Wilson began praying he knew where Mandy would be. Mandy had to be somewhere around but where? In a place as big as this, it was easy to get lost so Mandy could be anywhere as far as he knew. The one thing that he hoped more than anything is that Mandy wouldn't be dead when they found her. That alone would make this honeymoon all for naught for how does one enjoy a honeymoon with their loved one dead? Just thinking of the honeymoon made Wilson wish he hadn't come here and just let Team Adabat do the work while he and Mandy continued to enjoy themselves. But Mandy had insisted and he knew better than to question his wife so he had come and he was helping to save all the imprisoned mice of Adabat. That ended up bringing another worry to Wilson. If Mandy got caught, would she be enslaved too? She is a mouse after all so the guards would probably lock her up with the other mice. Not a problem since Jessica knew the code that would free them from the room they were locked in but Wilson would much rather save Mandy before she even gets captured. Wilson snapped out of his thoughts just in time to focus back on the corridor and what was ahead of him. They were running down an empty corridor that seemed to stretch on for a while. The guards were still running after them with their guns blasting at them but the Royal Fighters were well ahead of them, the guards would never catch them. Unfortunately…those guards were the last guards they'd have to worry about. Wilson and Team Adabat ran around another corner… and found themselves staring in horror at a bunch of other guards who were marching through the hallway! The Royal Fighters screeched to a halt and the guards turned around to face them. They instantly sprang into action.

"It's the intruders!" screeched one guard "Shoot to kill!"

The guards were all too happy to oblige. They began shooting at the Royal Fighters. They threw themselves onto the floor to dodge the shots, causing them to accidentally shoot the other guards that were after them as they darted around the corner. The guards cursed

their mistake and they pointed their guns down at the Royal Fighters. Felix quickly sprung to action by pulling off some tail feathers, stiffening them into clubs and throwing them at the guards like javelins. The feathers hit the guards and knocked them all down onto their backs. Taran got to his feet and he quickly grabbed one of the guard's guns. He'd always wanted a new weapon since the time he'd lost his during the Devatron invasion* and now he had one. He was impressed with how heavy-duty it was and he could hardly wait to use it. It looked like he had the chance to use it for more guards were coming down the corridor and getting ready to fire at the Royal Fighters. Taran opened fire immediately and let the guards have it with a shower of laser blasts. The guards fired back but Taran's aim was considerably better than theirs and Taran hit a good few guards already and killed them instantly. But he was just one man with a gun, that wouldn't keep the guards at bay for long so Scott and Jessica filled up the rear by firing energy spears at them. The spears ended up stunning the guards and knocking them down onto the floor, giving Taran less firepower to worry about. But their luck was about to run out for a single guard sneaked up behind the Royal Fighters and aimed his gun at them. He was a high-rank of guard, his uniform displaying different colours to the usual guards and his weapon having more features than the other guard's guns. This guard's gun had set modes such as stun blasts, laser blasts that killed instantly and flash blasts which blinded the enemy momentarily. The guard had it set to stun. He had the idea that stunning them and THEN killing them would be the best method of killing them. The guard fired stun-blasts at all the Royal Fighters, stunning them instantly and bringing them down onto the floor. They were still conscious but they were completely paralyzed. They couldn't move at all. Now the Royal Fighters were scared. They couldn't move at all and there was a guard standing above them. He was the only one left for Team Adabat had brought down the rest. But one guard was all that was needed right now. Smiling triumphantly, the guard switched his gun to laser mode and prepared to shoot the paralyzed Mobians. Wilson could hear the ominous whirring of a primed laser gun. He could see his life flashing before his eyes as death was coming for him. But it seemed fate was going to allow him to live for as the guard prepared to shoot, something jumped on him from behind and covered his eyes, causing his head to jerk back and shoot wildly up at the ceiling with

his gun. It was Mandy! The mouse had finally found them and she instantly attacked the guard to save Wilson and Team Adabat from a terrible fate. The guard tried to get Mandy off of himself but the mouse clung on tightly. Then Mandy bit him on the neck, earning a loud scream of pain from the guard as her powerful teeth sunk into his neck. Mandy didn't bite him in a fatal spot though and she wasn't intending to kill the guard, just cause him enough pain to drop his gun. The guard dropped it and Mandy let go of him, leaving the guard to clutch his sore neck in agony. Mandy picked up his dropped gun and she smacked him on the head with it as if the gun was an enormous club. That instantly knocked the guard out and the Royal Fighters were safe for the moment. Mandy ran over to the paralyzed Mobians and she threw her arms around Wilson.

"Oh thank god I was in time!" she shrieked with relief "Are you all OK?"

"We're paralyzed for the moment Mandy but we're fine." said Wilson "We're just waiting for the stun blasts to wear off so we can move again."

"Oh thank goodness." sighed Mandy, her hand over her heart in relief "I worried I wasn't gonna make it in time, I thought I was going to lose you Wilson."

"You very nearly did too." said Wilson "We were goners until you showed up".

"And boy did you kick that guard's ass!" laughed Scott "Especially when you bit him! You really had him when you did that!"

"Yeah, like most mice I do have a strong bite." said Mandy modestly "I don't prefer to use it though, I don't really like biting people. In this case, I had to make an exception."

"Well you've saved us now and once we can move again, we can get outta here." said Wilson.

"Oh no, not yet honey, we still haven't saved the mice yet." said Mandy "Benedict told me that he'd ordered the guards to kill you and Team Adabat so I had to abandon the mission for the sake of your

lives. Now you're all safe, we can get back to saving the mice."

"I see." said Wilson "And by the way, did you say…Benedict?" he asked, horrified to hear the name being spoken again.

"Yeah, remember that jerk from High School? He's leading this group." explained Mandy "But he's not the man behind all this, he's just one of the players. Apparently there are three groups of rats in the world teaming up to enslave or exterminate mice populations everywhere. I'm not sure if any have actually been killed yet but Benedict didn't seem to indicate they'd killed any yet so hopefully, they've just enslaved mice and not exterminated any."

"So this whole group of rats is one of three groups trying to enslave or exterminate the mice population?!" gasped Jessica "That's just… sick!"

"I know and by the power infested in me, I'm gonna put a stop to them!" declared Mandy "Once I find out about the other two groups and where they are, I will be on them like a wild animal!"

"We'll alert the R.F.S. once our honeymoon's over." said Wilson "They'll be on the case instantly."

"Indeed." said Mandy "I can just imagine blue dude right now spin-dashing all them rats and making them sorry they were born." she said with a dark smile on her face, an unusual expression for the mouse to have.

Then suddenly, Mandy felt the cold steel of a gun barrel being pointed at her head and the mouse threw her arms up immediately. She had a nasty feeling who the man pointing the gun at her was and the voice that crept out from behind her confirmed her feeling.

"I wouldn't do anything Mandy or the floor will end up with a new coat of paint…red paint that is." purred the voice of none other than Benedict the Rat.

He had finally woken up after being knocked out for a while and had found Mandy at last. Now he had the poor girl at his mercy with a revolved pressed tightly against her head and the Royal Fighters

were paralyzed still so they couldn't help her. Wilson gritted his teeth upon hearing Benedict's voice again. He hoped never to see him again after what he had done to him in High School.

"You…I'd been hoping I wouldn't see you again." he snarled.

"Nice to see you too Wilson." sneered Benedict "You're still looking as pathetic as ever. Bet you're still the same yellow-bellied coward you were in High School."

"Guess again ugly, I'm a lot braver now than I used to be." crowed Wilson "I'm even a member of the R.F.S. and along with Mandy, I fight against evil and help save the world. Does that sound like a coward to you?"

Benedict just growled at him.

"Whatever, you're still pathetic to me." he snapped "Now then, you five better stand down before Mandy gets a bullet in the head."

"We can't move, we're paralyzed dummy." snapped Scott "One of your stupid guards snagged us."

"Well in that case, I can just kill you all now." said Benedict gleefully "And once you're dead Wilson…I shall make Mandy my own. Don't worry about her, I'll make sure she's well kept and that she's not so lonely without you."

"Yeah right, you'll lock me up with the other mice and make me a slave no doubt." muttered Mandy "And if you kill my husband, you will officially have signed your death warrant Bene-dork!" she snarled threateningly.

"If it means having you for my own, I'm all too happy to sign that death warrant." snorted Benedict, pulling out another revolver from his coat so he could kill the paralyzed Royal Fighters but still keep Mandy at gun point with his other revolver "Now then, say goodbye to your friends and your husband."

"No, please, don't kill them!" begged Mandy "Don't you dare, don't you freaking dare!"

Benedict ignored her and pointed the other revolver at Wilson. Then came the most fortuitous moment that anybody would experience today. The paralysis finally wore off and Scott jumped to his feet and gave Benedict a powerful uppercut to the face that threw him across the room and caused him to drop his revolvers. Scott threw energy spears at the revolvers and destroyed them so Benedict couldn't use them anymore. The lynx smirked at the smartly-dressed rat.

"Villains, they always talk too much." he sneered.

Mandy lowered her arms and she grasped Scott into a grateful hug, amazed at the fact he had made such a turn around so quickly.

"Oh thank you so much Scott!" she cheered "I thought you were all done for until you did that!"

"Aw, thanks Mandy." said Scott, blushing bright red with pleasure "In all honesty, we're just lucky the paralysis wore off in time. We'd be doomed if it didn't."

"Yeah, you'd all be dead and I'd be a slave for Benedict." said Mandy with a shudder "Thank goodness for that."

"Well now the danger's averted, let's save those mice." said Wilson, getting to his feet.

Benedict wasn't done yet though. He picked himself up and he gritted his teeth. He was well mad now and he looked like he was about ready to kill somebody, his red eyes narrowed down to tiny dots swimming in the white sclera of his eyes and his fur seemed to stand up on end.

"None of you will leave this building alive!" he snarled "I'll kill you all, even you Mandy! And then to add insult to injury, I'll kill all the captive mice and request the other two groups in the world to kill THEIR captive mice too!"

That seemed to indicate that no mouse that had been captured by The Exterminators had been killed yet so Mandy put her worries at ease over that. She raised her fists and prepared to fight.

"You can just try it Bene-jerk!" she growled.

Benedict lunged at Mandy but the mouse punched him in the gut, grabbed him by the tie and then swung him into a wall as hard as she could. Benedict winced as pain flooded through his body but there was more pain to come for him. Wilson seized Benedict by the collar and he punched him down on the floor. The dog was determined to make Benedict suffer, especially after all he had done to him in High School. The bully was having his turn at being bullied now. Benedict picked himself up and threw a punch at Wilson. Wilson just grabbed his fist and punched him in the nose. Team Adabat were quite content to stand back and watch Wilson and Mandy beat up Benedict since he was more their enemy than theirs and given Benedict's abysmal fighting prowess, they didn't need to get involved. Benedict bared his claws and he tried to claw Wilson across the face but he missed as the dog leaned backwards and he kicked Benedict in the gut. Mandy ran around behind Benedict and kicked him in the back. Benedict was thrown down onto the floor by that attack. Wilson tried to launch another attack on Benedict but the rat grabbed his ankle and tripped him up. He then prepared to bite Wilson on the neck but Mandy yanked him by the hair and pulled him away from Wilson. Benedict elbowed Mandy in the gut to make her let go and he punched her in the face. But given how weak he was, that punch barely so much as made Mandy wince. It just felt like being slapped to her. Mandy uppercut Benedict and then kicked him down onto the floor. The furious rat decided he'd had enough being punched around like this so he got up on all fours and pounced at Mandy like a ravenous wolf. But then Wilson leaped in and dropkicked him away from Mandy. His kick had been well aimed for Benedict ended up hurling through the air and straight into a hole in the wall. This hole in the wall was a garbage chute, used for disposing of any rubbish in the building. A loud scream echoed through the chute as Benedict ended up sliding down the chute and heading towards the disposed rubbish that awaited him at the bottom. Wilson and Mandy stood by the entrance and they listened as Benedict's screams grew fainter and fainter.

"Whew, that's over and done with. Let's go Mandy." said Wilson.

"Wait, I wanna hear him hit bottom." said Mandy, holding up her hand to stop Wilson.

She listened on until finally, Benedict's screams could no longer be heard. He had presumably gone down too far for them to hear of he had already hit bottom. Nevertheless, Benedict was defeated and by the time he got out of the waste disposal, it would be too late for him to do anything. Now he was defeated, Mandy ran off down the corridor and lead the Royal Fighters to where the imprisoned mice were all kept. Mandy had remembered the way so it was no trouble finding the room again. Now they had found it, Mandy punched in the code that opened the door and the door opened up, releasing the 1,000 mice that had all been captured and locked up in this hideout. The mice didn't wait for a minute, they all ran for it as fast as they could. The Royal Fighters ran out with them, eager to leave this place as much as the mice were. As they all ran for it, Mandy couldn't help but laugh with glee.

"We did it! We saved all the mice of Adabat!" she cheered "And we taught Benedict a thing or two as well!"

"Let me say that getting to punch him was satisfying." laughed Wilson "Felt good to get back at him after what he did to me back in High School."

"I'll bet it did." said Mandy with a wink "Especially since you're the one who sent him down the chute." she added with a chuckle.

"Now all the mice are safe, let's get them all returned home." said Scott "I imagine we'll be a while given how many there are…"

"We'll manage, don't worry." said Jessica "And we'll put the R.F.S. on high alert for the other two groups that are supposedly around."

"That's a great idea Jessica." said Mandy "So now me and Wilson can rest at ease and enjoy the rest of our honeymoon."

"Yeah, look forward to resuming that." chuckled Wilson.

The Royal Fighters all left the building with the mice running behind them and they all headed off into the jungle and back to the beaches. It had been a tough mission but the Royal Fighters had succeeded in the end and the mice of Adabat were safe. But for how long? And would The Exterminators strike again after this? All

Mandy knew know was that the Royal Fighters would be on the case and The Exterminators would be…exterminated.

Later that day, Wilson and Mandy had returned to their holiday lodge while Team Adabat had seen to getting all the mice returned home and back where they belong. It had been a long day and the sun was beginning to set now but the mice were all back home and Adabat could now sleep easy that night, knowing that the case had been solved and that the villains had been defeated. But the whole day had been troubling for Mandy and right at this minute, she was just sitting in a chair on the decking of their holiday lodge and staring at the sunset, her mind unsettled and full of unsettling images about what she had heard today. Rats were enslaving mice everywhere and holding onto the other option of killing them too. Being a mouse herself, she could not keep her mind off of this disturbing revelation and it could only get more disturbing until she hears the good news that The Exterminators are defeated and incarcerated and that the mice were no longer in trouble. As is, she could only wait for such news to arrive. She snapped out of her thoughts when she heard the sound of Wilson approaching her. Mandy looked to her side to see Wilson coming towards her. He sat down on a chair beside Mandy and smiled at her.

"Well Mandy, everything's been sorted now. The mice are back in their homes and the Adabat Police are seeing that the rats in that building get arrested and their hideout gets destroyed. They'll never strike again."

"Oh, that's wonderful honey." said Mandy, not really that happy about it.

"Why Mandy, what's the matter?" Wilson asked "I thought you'd be thrilled about that."

"I am Wilson, don't worry on that." said Mandy "It's just…I wish that the mice and rats weren't enemies. Why can't we all live in peace? I may hate rats but today has just had me second-guessing my hatred and making me think why should we hate each other when we can just be friends? It's not that hard I mean look at Kari, she's a rat but she's decent and she can get along with mice so why can't other rats follow that example?"

"Why indeed, that's a good point Mandy." said Wilson, lightly stroking Mandy's back to make her feel better "Say, when did all this mice and rat rivalry start anyway?"

"I…don't know." said Mandy glumly "I've just grown up around rat and mouse rivalry and I've just sort of grown to hate rats since my family hated them too, especially Marion. Oh boy, she hated rats to the point of refusing to sit in the same room with one! But now, I'm regretting my hatred and now I'm wishing we could all get along. I want this stupid rodent rivalry to end already, especially after all we've been through today."

"I understand darling." said Wilson "And you know what? I'll be there to help you make that dream come true Mandy. Me and you managed to stop racism at school when we were kids, I'm sure we can end a rivalry between mice and rats."

Mandy smiled at Wilson, her eyes twinkling in the sunset.

"That's a wonderful idea Wilson." said Mandy "And I'm sure we'll succeed."

"I'm sure we will too." said Wilson "Now then, let's forget about all this and enjoy the rest of our honeymoon. We only have a few more days to enjoy it."

"Yeah, let's focus on our honeymoon." said Mandy agreeably "No need to worry about mice and rats now, the other Royal Fighter teams are on it now."

"Indeed." said Wilson "And when our honeymoon's over, we can join in and help put an end to this."

"Oh yes, and the best thing about all that will be having you at my side my handsome husband." purred Mandy delightedly.

The couple smiled at each other again and they pulled themselves into a loving kiss with each other. They both wrapped their arms around one another and kissed deeply with the sunlight shining over them as if delighted to be watching this. A sweet ending for a big day and the honeymoon was just about to get sweeter for Wilson

and Mandy still had the rest of the week to enjoy it and get as romantic as possible with each other. Nothing could spoil it for them now…

Meanwhile, Benedict had escaped from the waste disposal and had fled his currently-being-ransacked-by-the-police base and had run off back to the headquarters of The Exterminators, a large building that was the size of an aircraft carrier and located squarely in the middle of the under-construction Central City**. Half of Central City had been rebuilt by now and this base had been built by The Exterminators under the pretence of it being a new warehouse. It had no public access though so nobody could go in and see what's going on in this base. In the base, Benedict was kneeling before an enormous rat who was sitting in a chair with a table in front of him. The table was full of contents such as documents, a phone, coasters for drinks and some lit candles. The rat was enormous, mostly in mass for his muscles were so big that it was a miracle he was still able to bend all his joints properly. He had a chunk of his left ear missing as if someone had taken a big bite out of it and his right eye was dead and grey while his left eye was still healthy and working properly. It was a piercing red colour that seemed to stare death at anybody it was focused on. He wore an army camouflage vest top that was various shades of green, grey and brown, matching trousers, knee pads, big bulky black boots and wrist bands that had sharp curved spikes on them. He wore a belt and on his left arm he wore an armband that bore the logo of The Exterminators. Over his muzzle, he wore a frightening looking mask that's primary purpose was to make him look intimidating. It wasn't life-support equipment or anything, it was just a mask that he wore for the sake of looking scary. The mask amplified his breathing, making him sound ominous with every breath he took. Beside the rat was an elephant who looked equally as terrifying as he did, the scarier thing about him being his size. The elephant was broad and muscular with a slight hunch in his back. He bore tattoos on his upper arms and wore elbow pads, thick gloves, a belt, trousers with zigzag patterns on them and heavy boots with knee pads perched above the boots. His eyes were green and he had huge tusks that protruded proudly from his mouth and he had a huge mace on the end of his trunk. He

looked deathly serious, a perfect minion for anybody to have. Benedict, who was covered in grime, dirt and rubbish and now smelt very bad thanks to being dumped in the rubbish, shook nervously as he addressed this rat. The rat could tell from Benedict's body language that he had bad news to deliver.

"B-B-B-Brawn sir…I-I-I-I-I h-h-h-have some d-d-d-distressing news for you." stammered Benedict "Th-th-th-the Adabat group has been terminated. Th-th-th-the mice h-h-have b-b-been r-r-rescued a-a-and the b-b-building h-h-has b-b-been r-r-ransacked and d-d-destroyed."

The muscular rat, name apparently Brawn, bashed his fists down on the table in rage, breaking it clean in half and sending splinters flying everywhere. Benedict freaked out at this and he puts his hands on his head in fear as Brawn stood up and glowered at him with his perfect eye and dead eye.

"It wasn't my fault!" shrieked Benedict "It was all Mandy's fault! She brought her husband and some friends with her to the base and they ruined everything!"

Brawn did not seem to care about this though, he still looked visibly ticked off with Benedict's failure. Benedict cowered before him, shaking like crazy.

"P-p-p-please Brawn, I-I-I'll make up f-f-for this. I-I-I w-w-won't fail you again!" he whimpered.

"No." Brawn breathed out from his mask, his voice highly amplified by the mask and sounding very intimidating and booming as he spoke **"You won't fail me again…"**

Benedict gulped for he realized what Brawn meant by that. Brawn towered over him and reached out to grab Benedict.

"No Brawn! Please!" begged Benedict as Brawn's hands closed around his neck and he was hoisted up off his feet by the rat "NOOOOOOOOO!"

His screams were silenced by a sickening crack that echoed around the room like a haunting ghost wail…

Footnotes:

*** See the Devatron saga from Heroes of Mobius Episodes 100-115**

**** It was destroyed in Heroes of Mobius Episode 76 and is being rebuilt now**

A Bitter Snowstorm 1

Arc 21: A Bitter Snowstorm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 161-163

Part 1: Unwanted Guests

White Acropolis, the primary example of a winter wonderland.

White Acropolis was an endless sea of snow and wind that blanketed all the mountains and blew through the valleys all around. White Acropolis only ever seemed to have one season: winter. Everyday was winter pretty much in a place like this. Snow everywhere, howling winds, biting cold and above all, dull skies. Such a habitat was the perfect place of exile for the notorious Blizzard the Ice Witch, a former politician turned murderer by a single bigotry person who just so happened to be the father of Amy Rose. After escaping from prison, Blizzard had been living in White Acropolis ever since, enjoying every minute of her life there since it was such a perfect habitat for her to live. White Acropolis was pretty much the only place on Mobius she was ever welcome to stay in, mainly because very few people live in White Acropolis and no cop would dare to traipse around here, she would have them all in an instant and even they knew it. Blizzard was unstoppable when she was surrounded by snow. Her powers allowed her to manipulate the snow to her whim and do whatever she pleased with it, even make art with it. Blizzard wasn't terrorizing any victims today though; she was deep down in an icy cavern with a huge cauldron that had icy blue flames flickering underneath it. Of course, these flames were cold like the ice itself and were made by magic. Blizzard was letting into her witchy side, that is to say the side where all her icy magic is. She was called "Blizzard the Ice Witch" for a reason after all. Long ago she had been part of a cult of ice witches and had left them to try and fulfil their purpose of bringing good to the world. Sadly after returning to her cult in Holoska after escaping prison in Mobotropolis…she found a sea of corpses all staining the snow red

with blood that poured from their mutilated bodies. Something had killed her entire cult and the entire sight of them dead caused poor Blizzard to lose her mind with grief. She had no idea who or what had killed her cult but she knew that she was alone and she was the only one left to carry out the original purpose. Unfortunately, her bad experiences with Aramis Rose and the death of her cult had left Blizzard with a black and white view on the world now. She believed that she had every right to rule New Mobotropolis now, considering herself to be an adequate queen and felt that the only way she could fulfil her deceased cult's purpose was to take over the city and rule it in her own special way. All it takes is one bad day to change somebody forever and in Blizzard's case, it was one very, VERY bad day that changed her forever indeed, the day she killed Aramis, got arrested, escaped and found her entire cult dead. One could only wonder what Blizzard would have been like if she hadn't had such a bad day. Maybe she would still be a nice woman, who knew? Right now Blizzard was concocting a spell that would guarantee a sound takeover of New Mobotropolis. She hadn't gone near the city since the time Eggman had tried to destroy it with the Egg Fleet and Metal Sonic had made a punching bag out of her* and now she thought she had been in hiding long enough to launch an unexpected attack. Her spell would give her an ice army that would give her an easy take over and she would be queen at last. Of course, she had to make the spell first. She had gotten out a book of spells that she was able to seal away into her space at the snap of her fingers and as the cauldron was waiting for use, she looked at the ingredients page for her spell.

"Ah, the Ice Warrior spell." she said as she turned to the page she was looking for "Just the spell I need to assure my victory. When I conduct this spell, I will have an army of unstoppable ice creatures and I will be the rightful ruler of New Mobotropolis! That city dared to be mean to me so a little payback is in hand for it, especially that wretched Council of Acorn! Once I'm ruler of New Mobotropolis, good will come to the city and I will have fulfilled the Cult of Ice's intentions."

She smiled to herself as looked up to the heavens.

"Oh my loving family, if only you could see me now." she said,

shedding a little tear for her cult "Especially my loving husband and…my dear children."

Blizzard had once been a married woman with kids of her own to look after. In the cult she had her own family and now they were gone, Blizzard was a widow and had lost her beloved children. It was their deaths she took the hardest and the deaths that truly made her snap. They probably might not be too keen on what Blizzard was doing now though so it was probably fortunate they were dead so they couldn't see what she had become now and deal with the pain of losing her in a way. Blizzard always cried for them at the end of each day and if she could find a spell that could raise people from the dead, she'd be all too happy to have her family back. As is, she was alone in this frozen wasteland and had to deal with it. Blizzard wiped her tears away and glanced back at the spell book.

"Now then, the cauldron must be pre-chilled before proceeding with the spell." she read from the book.

Glancing over at the cauldron, she could practically see ice forming underneath it from the cold ice flames that were chilling the cauldron like meat in a freezer. Blizzard felt the side of the cauldron to see how cold it was. It was so cold that it may as well be frozen.

"I'd say that's plenty chilled enough." said Blizzard happily "Now then…"

She looked back at the spell book and looked at the list of ingredients.

"…A pound of crushed ice, a pile of fresh snow, a drop of mildew, a hair of fox, a leaf of any kind of plant, a hedgehog's quill and a piece of an elemental Mobian (not including ice related creatures)." she read.

She glanced over at the table of spell ingredients she had for various kinds of spells she could make and concoct in that magical cauldron of hers. To her dismay, she only had three of the ingredients needed to make the spell. A pound of crushed ice, a pile of fresh snow and a drop of mildew. The other four ingredients she

would have to search for. Blizzard sighed to herself in annoyance.

"One thing that an ice witch finds more annoying than anything else, not having all the required ingredients for a spell!" she moaned "Well I'll just have to find them won't I? And fortuitously enough…ha, ha, ha, ha…I know exactly where to find them!"

She went over to the ingredients table and picked out a small purple sphere that was the size of a chicken's egg. She held it between her index finger and her thumb and she looked like she was about to throw it down on the floor. It was a little smoke bomb, most notably a magical smoke bomb. One poof and you disappear in a cloud of smoke. Blizzard decided to take some spares since she would need another one to get back here once she was finished with her little scavenger hunt.

"New Mobotropolis has a fox there, a twin-tailed one to be precise." she mused to herself "And I think there was a plant creature there too, specifically one with leaves on it for hair. As for hedgehog quills, I could use my own but I'd much rather use some other hedgehog's quill for the spell. And given how much I despise Amy Rose, I'll make it HER quill I use! For the elemental Mobian, I'm not sure if there's one in New Mobotropolis but I'll find one."

Given how she had been so focused on mostly Amy and Castle Acorn the last time she showed up, she didn't really register everybody who lived in New Mobotropolis, thus she could easily be unsure about who she would find there. But she DID know that she would find some of the things she was looking for in New Mobotropolis. Now she knew where she was going, Blizzard held the sphere up above her head and aimed at the floor.

"Ala…KAZAM!" she barked, throwing the sphere down on the floor as furiously as she could.

The sphere exploded into a billow of smoke that clouded Blizzard as it drifted up around her. With that cloud of smoke around her, Blizzard vanished into thin air and the cloud of smoke soon disappeared with her. New Mobotropolis was in for an unpleasant moment once she arrived…

Blizzard soon reappeared behind a house in New Mobotropolis. It was lucky for her since this could have gone horribly wrong and she could have ended up in an entirely conspicuous area where she would be spotted immediately. Blizzard looked around to make sure that she was in the right place. The houses struck her as familiar and she spotted Castle Acorn looming proudly above the city in all its majestic glory. Blizzard smiled to herself.

"I'm here." she purred to herself "Now to find the ingredients I need…"

Her attention was soon diverted for she spotted a rather unusual looking purple and orange house nearby. This was the home of Wilson the Dog and his wife Mandy Mouse. Blizzard crept over to the house and decided to explore it. An unusual house was more than enough to pique her interest and she began to wonder if the people she was looking for would be in it. Blizzard looked around to make sure nobody was watching and then she peeked through the window. What she saw was Sonic the Hedgehog with Queen Sally Acorn, his best friend Tails the Fox and Wilson the Dog all gathered around in the sitting room and discussing something. As you all know, Mandy just got kidnapped by rats and Wilson was relying the bad news to Sonic, Tails and Sally**. Blizzard didn't really care what was going on, she was more interested in the fact she had found a fox already, most notably Tails. She was waiting to see if an opportunity would present itself for her to get a hair from Tails for her spell. She sat and waited as the discussion continued. Wilson seemed to be building up the spirit to rescue his kidnapped wife.

"That's the spirit Wilson!" said Sonic happily "So shall we get going?"

"Are you kidding, of course we shall!" said Wilson determinedly "This is my wife we're talking about! She's been captured and she needs rescuing pronto! Let's go for it!"

"As much as I'd like to come, I think it'll be wise for me to stay here and keep an eye on the city." said Sally "I'll keep an eye on things while you're gone Sonic. You know, in case Eggman or anyone tries to attack the city while you're away."

"Fair enough." said Sonic "Me and Wilson will just join up with Team Chaotix and Team Nekronopolis so we can save Mandy and Kari both at the same time."

"Kari's been kidnapped too?!" blurted Wilson.

"I'll explain later Wilson." said Sonic "So Sally, wish us luck out there."

"Good luck you two." said Sally "You'll both need it. Save Mandy, save Kari, bring them both home and stop The Exterminators for good."

"We will your queenly-ness." said Sonic, giving Sally a farewell embrace "Hope all goes well for you while I'm gone."

"Thank you." said Sally, returning the embrace and then giving Sonic a peck on the cheek for good luck.

Now the farewells were over, Sonic and Wilson instantly ran out of the door and Sonic carried Wilson in his arms as he sped off to Nekronopolis to let Team Chaotix and Team Nekronopolis know that Mandy had been kidnapped and they were going to save her and Kari at the same time. Sally and Tails watched as the two left, hoping they would return home with Mandy safe and sound and with good news to deliver. Blizzard watched as Sonic ran off with Wilson and she grinned to herself.

"Sonic has other plans it seems." she said to herself "Good…he can't interfere with my work then. I best act now before he returns. I must say…it seems odd that the queen gave him an embrace and a kiss. Is she…infatuated with him?"

Just the very thought of the queen in love instantly made Blizzard feel envious towards her. Being she is a widow and no longer has a husband now it wasn't that hard to see why she'd feel envious over something like this. But Blizzard didn't have time to be bitter, she had a job to do and she had one of the ingredients she was looking for inside the house she was spying on. Blizzard stepped away from the window and hid around the corner, waiting for Tails to come out of the house so she could pluck a hair or two from him. Even the

smallest bit of fur from Tails would be enough so Blizzard didn't have to be too messy about this, nor did she have to pluck him bald like a chicken being prepared for the marketplace. No sooner had Sonic left, Tails and Sally left the house and started heading off to Royal HQ. Blizzard watched, keeping herself scarce and waiting for a good moment to move and pursue the two. As desperate as she was to get a hair from Tails, she knew better than to just make a big scene about it. Even with Sonic gone she knew she was in trouble if the Royal Fighters were alerted. She wasn't physically powerful and her powers could only give her the advantage for so long, especially with the absence of any snow or ice around. She was out of her league in an environment like this and if she played it foolishly, she could end up in real trouble. Prison was no worry for her but knowing Sally, she'd have a way of stopping her from breaking out again. Blizzard suspected Sally would be a little smarter than her parents before her about this. As soon as Tails and Sally were a few feet away, Blizzard got out one of the spare smoke bombs she'd taken with her and threw it onto the ground. She had taken plenty of spares since experience had taught her you will ALWAYS need more than one or two bombs. With her location in mind, the smoke bomb whisked her over to Royal HQ, the very place that Tails and Sally were heading to. She didn't know anything about Royal HQ since she didn't go anywhere near it in her first outing in this city so she had no idea what the building she now appeared in front of housed inside. Blizzard hid around the back of the building and kept an eye out as Tails and Sally walked up the hill and headed straight for Royal HQ.

"I sure hope Sonic and Wilson come home with Mandy safe and sound." said Tails, concern dominating the tone of his voice "I can't bear the thought of Mandy in danger. And I also hope Kari gets saved too, just thinking about how upset Miranda is about her disappearance is enough to make me feel down."

"Don't worry Tails, Sonic will save both girls and be home before we know it." said Sally reassuringly "When has Sonic ever let us down?"

"I can't think of one time he ever did." said Tails brightly "Although there have been times where we've had to do something without him. Most notably when we along with Shadow had to save Chun-

Nan from those Raiju Ninjas***."

"Yes and at that time I along with other Royal Fighter groups had the task of defending Sonic from Eggman." said Sally "I will never forget that day, it was one of the big gateways to me becoming a fighter after the Devatron invasion. So, have you been up to anything lately?" she asked, hoping to stir up a new conversation with Tails.

"Well I have been working on new weapons that I thought you could wield." said Tails "Consider it a little present for you."

"Aww, for me? Tails, you shouldn't have." chuckled Sally, flattered by such generosity "What new weapons have you made for me then?"

"I'll show you once we get into the lab." said Tails as they approached the door of Royal HQ.

Sally opened the door and walked inside. Tails was about to walk inside until Blizzard threw an icicle that whizzed over his tails to catch his attention. Tails felt the icicle whiz over the tips of his twin tails and he wondered what it was. He ran over to the direction it had come from and looked around the corner of the building. There was nothing there. Tails turned around and scratched his brainy head.

"That's funny, I thought I felt something being thrown at me." he mused.

This was just the right moment. Blizzard had run around the back of the building after throwing the icicle at Tails and now Tails had his back to her and the tips of his tails were practically winking at her from around the corner. Blizzard stuck her arm around the corner and using her fingernails, she gripped the tip of Tails' left tail and then plucked a bit of fur from it, enough to place on top of a five pence coin and cover it. The tip of the tail wasn't very sensitive compared to the rest of the tail so Tails hardly felt that. He still felt a bit of it though and he turned around quickly to see what it was pulling on his tail. He saw nothing again. Tails began to feel a little nervous. When strange things happened, they never meant anything good.

"Is someone playing tricks on me?" Tails wondered to herself "If so then it isn't funny. I hope they stop it before they start annoying me."

"Tails honey, I thought you wanted to show me your new weapons for me!" called Sally's voice from around the front of the building.

"Oh uh, coming Miss Sally!" cried Tails, scuttling off as fast as he could to the front side of Royal HQ.

The moment he left, Blizzard chuckled to herself and she placed the bits of fur in a capsule that she summoned out of thin air (she knows magic, you should expect this from her).

"Got the fox fur, more than enough for the spell." she purred wickedly to herself "Now next, I think I'll get a hedgehog quill from Amy…"

With that said, she ran off back around Royal HQ and headed towards the houses down the bottom of the hill. With any luck, Amy would be in one of them and then she'd get the next ingredient for her spell. One thing was for certain, she was going to enjoy this, especially since Amy was her most hated enemy…

Back in Royal HQ, Tails and Sally had walked into the laboratory, Tails' obvious favourite room in all of the headquarters. It still never ceased to amaze Sally how hi-tech and science savvy the lab looked with its steel floors and walls, whirring machinery and giant computers that provided them with much surveillance of the planet itself. Tails would often spend much time in the lab, tinkering with as much machinery as he could and making whatever his mind would allow him to. Tails had lately been working on new weapons for the Royal Fighters, some of them that is since not all the Royal Fighters needed weapons. He had been holding onto showing them off to the Royal Fighters he'd made them all but at this point, Tails was too keen to show Sally the new weapons he had made for her so he was going to show them her now. Tails signalled with a gesture of his hands for Sally to wait a minute and he ran over to a cabinet that he had reserved for himself. He opened the top draw of the cabinet and took something out from it. He closed the draw and then

showed Sally what he had gotten out. There were a pair of blue metal rings that looked like they could clip around somebody's wrist. They were two inches long and looked well-built. Sally looked at them unsurely whereas Tails wore the face of enthusiasm over presenting them to the Queen of New Mobotropolis herself.

"Your new weapons your majesty." said Tails with a smile.

"Um…thank you." said Sally, trying to remain polite "But uh…what kind of weapon is this?"

"Ah, that's the surprising part." said Tails, his grin getting wider as he was about to tell more about them "Please put them on your wrists."

Sally took the rings from Tails' hands and she clipped one on each wrist, still looking unsure about them. They looked quite nice on her wrists but all they seemed to do was add to her appearance, nothing more. Tails however was still grinning at her, suggesting that these were not mere decorations though they appeared to be.

"Now clench your fists, really tightly." ordered Tails, clenching his own fists as some sort of demonstration.

Sally did so…and then out from underneath her arms emitted a pair of energy blades! The blades emitted from the metal rings on her wrists and were pure concentrated energy, not like a normal sword. The blades were twenty-four inches long, four of those inches stretching behind the rings and under her arms for stability. Sally gaped at them and her face curled into a big beam of joy as if she'd been given the birthday present of a lifetime.

"Oh my goodness! Energy blades!" laughed Sally, unable to contain her excitement.

"Yes, I thought arm-mounted energy blades would be the perfect weapon for someone like your Miss Sally." said Tails "The staff was OK but let's face it, it's quite cumbersome in battle and can get in the way a lot. Those energy blades will be much more efficient in battle and they're easier to put away and get out again since all you have to do is clench your fists tightly to make them come out."

"This is amazing Tails!" cried Sally happily, giving the blades a swing to see how they felt when she used them "I have no idea how you managed to make something like this! You are a genius!"

"Aw…thank you your grace." said Tails, blushing bright red at the kind queen's compliments.

"You're welcome little Tails." said Sally "Though…how do I turn them off?"

"Just clench your fists tightly again." said Tails.

Sally did so and then the blades disappeared back into the rings like a light switching off.

"Very nice indeed." said Sally "Although, what if there's a time I accidentally activate them? I don't want to clench my fists and accidentally chop someone up to pieces."

"You have to clench your fists REALLY tightly to activate them." explained Tails "You have to apply the exact pressure of your fingers in your palm in order for them to work. If you just do it gently, the blades won't activate."

Sally tried this, curling her fingers into the palm of her hand softly. Nothing happened. Sally pressed on her palms a bit. Still nothing happened. Sally pressed as hard as she possibly could on her palms. The blades activated. Sally was marvelled by this amazing tech and she could hardly wait to go into battle with them. Sally turned the blades off and she took the rings off, storing them in her vest pocket.

"In battle, it might be wise to keep my fists clenched at all times so I don't accidentally turn them off." she said.

"That's the best idea your majesty." said Tails "I can't wait to see you fighting with them."

"I can't wait to test them either." said Sally enthusiastically "Thanks so much for this present Tails, it's wonderful and it'll be much better than my staff."

She gave Tails a grateful hug to show her gratitude for him taking time out of his life to make the weapons for her. Tails blushed with pleasure, pleased that the lovely queen liked his invention for her.

"You're very welcome Miss Sally." said Tails modestly "You're not the only one who's got new weapons though, I made some for other Royal Fighters too."

"Really? Which ones?" asked Sally, breaking up the hug.

"Wilson, Mandy, Cosmo and Cream." explained Tails "Shall I show you them?"

"That's very nice Tails but I'd rather you show them to the people you made them for." said Sally "It'll be nice to see their reactions to your gifts for them."

"OK." said Tails "I bet they'll like them. Speaking of my sweet little Cosmo, I think I'll give her new weapon to her now. I wonder where she is?"

He wouldn't have to wonder for long for the answer soon came, literally, running through the door and into the lab. The answer had arrived in the form of two girls, said girls being the hard hitting but slightly crazy Amy Rose and the lovely, peaceful and sweet Cosmo the Seedrian. They had been having a chat together out in the city and now they had come barging into Royal HQ, whipping up a frenzy between them. The two girls looked panicked as if they'd just seen a nuclear war zone and they were both talking at once, trying to be heard over one another. Tails and Sally could barely hear the two over each other but they could vaguely make out words such as "Something…hair…don't know…disappeared" It made no sense of course since they couldn't understand what they were trying to say so Sally put her hands on both their shoulders to calm the frantic females down.

"Amy, Cosmo, please settle down!" cried Sally "You're whipping up a frenzy here!"

Amy and Cosmo calmed down to catch their breath and then Amy spoke first since she seemed the keenest to speak.

"Queen Sally, something strange is happening!" shrieked Amy.

"Oh dear." said Sally worriedly.

"Not another tear in the sky is it?" asked Tails worriedly.

"Uh, no, the tear in the sky's not quite that strange anymore since we're kinda used to it now." said Amy "Something's been sneaking around and taking bits of mine and Cosmo's hair for some reason! Look!"

She turned around, her back now facing Sally and Tails and she pointed to the back of her head which, evidently enough seemed to be having a quill missing from it. It had been plucked like a feather on a bird and now Amy looked quite silly with that gap between her quills. It would grow back though but not for a while so Amy had to put up with looking like that for quite some time. Sally stared at Amy incredulously. Who on Mobius would do something like that?

"What in the name of…?" she gasped.

Cosmo stepped forward and showed Tails a strand of her leafy hair that ran down the side of her face, which had a chunk of it missing. It was like somebody had just grabbed it and ripped a piece off like a sheet of paper. Tails frowned at the sight of his girlfriend's ruined hair. Who would be so cruel as to snatch a piece of Cosmo's hair? And who would want to pluck a quill from Amy too? The questions began to burn in Tails' mind as he tried to work out the possible answers to them. Sally didn't seem to think that was such a big deal though.

"Amy, Cosmo, maybe it was just a silly boy or girl playing a prank on you both." said Sally bluntly "Nothing to worry about."

"It was no prank your majesty." said Cosmo "We didn't hear any childish laughing and when we turned around to see who had done it, we saw nothing. It was like the person who did this just…vanished into thin air."

"I doubt someone playing a prank can do that." noted Amy "Nobody in this city has magic powers and I know for certain that nobody can

move as fast as Sonic. If they could, we would have heard them running away. As is, we heard and saw nothing. The person who took a bit of mine and Cosmo's hair just vanished like that." she snapped her fingers to emphasize what she meant.

Tails and Sally looked at each other. How strange, somebody pinches a bit of Cosmo and Amy's hair and just vanishes? What was going on here? Tails recalled what it happened to him earlier. He felt something pull some fur out of the tip of his tail. Could that be connected to Amy and Cosmo getting a bit of their hair pinched? Something was going on around here and it was definitely funny business.

"You know Sally…I felt something pluck a bit of fur from the tip of my left tail." said Tails "And then Amy gets a quill taken and Cosmo gets a piece of her hair taken. This can't be a weird coincidence, something's up here."

"You're very right." said Sally grimly "Something's up indeed. Who would do this and why?"

"I would be tempted to blame Eggman or Finitevus for this but come on, why would THEY do that?" asked Amy, her voice indicating she wasn't too pleased to be eliminating that theory "They'd take me, Tails and Cosmo whole, not just bits of us! And they can't just disappear like this too!"

"Do we know anybody who can disappear in the blink of an eye?" asked Cosmo.

"Well there is Ixis Naugus but he's stuck in the void so I'm not blaming him for a minute…" muttered Sally as horrible thoughts of the grotesque Mobian hybrid wizard filled her head.

"Ixis who?" asked Tails curiously.

"Never mind." said Sally quickly "I'm not sure if we do know anybody who can just disappear like that…we'll have to investigate it."

"How can we investigate something that disappears?" asked Cosmo "We have no idea where it maybe now and it could be anywhere."

"Good point." said Sally "However, maybe someone in the city's seen this…hair-snatcher. We could go around the city and ask any possible witnesses, see if they saw who's doing this."

"Good idea your majesty." said Cosmo politely "Shall we start looking then?"

"Before that Cosmo, I've got a little present for you." said Tails, running over to the cabinet and he opened the top drawer. He took something out of it and he showed it to Cosmo. The thing was a small disc-shaped object that was five inches wide and two inches thick with some noticeable slots around the sides, meaning there was something that could come out of the slots. Cosmo looked at it, wondering what it was.

"I've made you your very own weapon to take into combat my sweet little rose." said Tails "It's a throwing disc, meant to be used a throwing weapon of course. The ingenious thing about it is that no matter how far you throw it, it'll always return to you."

He threw it at the wall to show Cosmo how it worked. The disc hurled through the air, pinged off the wall and it then boomeranged back towards Tails. Tails caught it in his hand and presented it back to Cosmo.

"Your primary fighting style seems to be throwing things at people so I thought a throwing weapon was a good idea for you Cosmo." said Tails "And here's another thing. If you want to cut through something or do more damage…"

He pressed a noticeable button on the top of the disc and much to Cosmo's surprise, four sharp blades about two inches long and curved like a scimitar sword unsheathed from the disc, making it a disc-shaped shuriken now.

"…it has blades that will allow it to become a bladed weapon. Handy against tougher opponents and if you need to cut through something." said Tails, looking very pleased with himself over the invention "I made one for Cream too so she doesn't have to throw Cheese all the time. So what do you think Cosmo? Do you like it?"

Cosmo just stared at the weapon, almost as if she was horrified Tails had dared to make her one.

"Um…thank you Tails." she said slowly, hoping not to sound ungrateful or anything "But…but you know I hate violence and all. I couldn't possibly have my own weapon."

"You seem OK throwing anything you can get your hands on though." said Tails "I'll never forget the time you threw a wok at Fong Zarr**** and knocked him out."

"B-b-but that's different." protested Cosmo "It wasn't my own weapon, I was using the surroundings to fight."

"Well Cosmo there'll be a time you NEED a weapon and there won't be anything lying around to throw at anybody." noted Tails "You need this weapon sweetie, it's for your own good. Please Cosmo, I'm looking out for the most wonderful girl I've ever met. Please accept this gift."

Cosmo looked at her boyfriend and could see the look in his eyes, telling her that he really cared for her and wanted to make sure she could defend herself. Cosmo began to feel bad, how could she refuse a gift from her boyfriend, especially since he'd put his heart and soul into it just for her? And also, Tails did have a legitimate point. Cosmo couldn't just use her surroundings as a weapon all the time, she'd need one of her own eventually. Cosmo decided to accept the weapon.

"I'm sorry Tails." said Cosmo, taking the disc out of Tails' hands "I'll accept your gift. After all, I will need a way of defending myself; I can't just sit around and wait for someone to save me all the time."

"Thank you precious." said Tails, embracing Cosmo gratefully.

Cosmo smiled and she hugged her adorable boyfriend back. It always warmed her heart to think how much Tails truly loves her. His love for her is what made her love him in return. Sally and Amy just looked at Tails and Cosmo, awed by the adorable pair embracing each other like a loving pair of lovebirds.

"Aren't they just adorable?" asked Amy.

"They are indeed." said Sally "I couldn't possibly think of a cuter couple."

"I bet when me and Sonic finally become a couple, we'll be as adorable as Tails and Cosmo." said Amy, picturing herself embracing Sonic and Sonic embracing her back.

Sally suddenly felt nervous now. What would Amy think if she found out she and Sonic were developing feelings for each other? Would the poor girl be heartbroken and fall into depression? Sally had to put those thoughts to the side for a minute since they had stuff to do.

"Ahem…OK then, shall we investigate this weird hair-snatching caper then?" asked Sally tightly.

"Sure your honour." said Tails "Let's get going."

With that said, Tails and the girls all left Royal HQ and headed off into the city of New Mobotropolis to ask any citizens if they had noticed anything unusual at all. They'd found out sooner rather than later though…

Outside in New Mobotropolis, Blizzard cackled to herself as she put the quill she'd plucked from Amy and the piece of Cosmo's hair she'd snatched into capsules and she made the capsules disappear into her hands. She'd had a lot of fun snatching that quill from Amy, even having to physically force herself not to laugh at it she enjoyed it so much. Cosmo was just a lucky coincidence for her since she was looking for a leaf of any kind of plant. Since Cosmo's hair was leafy, she thought that would do and Cosmo was a plant-like alien so it would surely be enough for the spell. She only needed one more thing now, a piece of an elemental Mobian. In this case, she could take whatever she needed. An item exclusive to their race, a bit of their fur, a drop of blood, even a limb or two and even internal organs. Blizzard didn't want to be too messy though so she was just going to go with a fur sample. Last thing she wanted was a murder investigation coming for her. A sample of fur would hardly be missed

so she'd get away scot-free and not be found out at all. Blizzard was known for her cunning and intelligence, she was far from stupid. Even in the days of her cult, her intelligence was renowned. As Blizzard peeked from her hiding place, which was another house, she kept her eyes out for any possible elemental Mobians.

"I'm sure this city was home to one." mused Blizzard "But then again, I didn't see any around when I first came here so maybe I'm mistaken. Never mind, I could always go to Chun-Nan, they're home to the water-panther race. I'll find one there easily…"

Then suddenly, something caught Blizzard's eye and she cast her attention over to a rather shady tree that was tall and proud with leaves on every branch. The tree was not that far away from where she was hiding. Under the tree, sitting against the bark and holding a picnic basket was a little female vixen cub with blue fur and wearing a utility belt around her waist with a shoulder strap attached to it. This was (who else?) Tails' super spy sister Sora Prower. She was lying down a picnic blanket and she set down a picnic basket on the blanket. It seemed she was planning on having a picnic with somebody. Blizzard watched, wondering who this girl was since Sora wasn't a member of the R.F.S. at the time she first attacked. She couldn't help but notice how similar to Tails she looked. Maybe they were related? No matter, Blizzard had no reason to pick on Sora. She firmly believed if she had no reason to antagonize somebody then she wouldn't bother with them. She still had a bit of decency left in her. Then she heard Sora talking and what she said was an instant attention grabber.

"It's such a nice day for a picnic. No wonder me and Ruben decided to pick this day to have one." said Sora "I do have to wonder what's taking that water-panther so long though. One would think he wouldn't keep a lady waiting, especially one he's good friends with."

"Water-panther? Here? What serendipity!" Blizzard cried to herself "How fortuitous can I get on this little shopping trip? Ha, ha, ha, ha."

Now she had a reason to antagonize Sora, see if she could tell her where this "Ruben" was. Blizzard emerged from hiding and she walked over to Sora, the vixen not really noticing her as she sat back and relaxed, waiting for Ruben to arrive.

"Oh Ruben…he's so cute." she murmured to herself, thinking back on how adorable Ruben looked to her "If only I could tell him what I think about him. But…he's so young yet. He might not be at the right age for love. 10 years is young after all."

Sora was quickly snapped out of her thoughts for a dark shadow loomed over her and an icy chill start to hang around in the air in front of her. Sora squealed in fright and pressed herself against the tree. Blizzard stood before her, a pretty sinister smirk spread out on her face and her eyes narrowed to dark slits of evil. Sora was instantly frightened of this stranger. Who was she and what was she here for?

"Wh-wh-who a-are you?" asked Sora worriedly.

"Please do not be frightened my child, I'm a harmless person." explained Blizzard, her voice as soft and gentle as a sunflower "I do not mean to frighten you. I just want to ask you something my dear."

"Tell me who you are first." said Sora.

"Very well, I am Blizzard the Ice Witch." explained Blizzard "And I would very much like to ask about the whereabouts of your friend "Ruben". I need him for a little spell I'm making."

Unfortunately for Blizzard, Sora instantly worked out who she was.

"Blizzard the Ice Witch? I've read your file on the computer data records in Royal HQ." she said "You're a former council member who killed a man named Aramis Rose, the father of Amy Rose. Your file also stated you tried to take over the city. You're evil and I'm not going to tell you where Ruben is! If you're making a spell, it's got to be for something evil!"

Blizzard scowled, wishing she had put on a false name or something to further fool this impudent girl. As is, she would have to use less civil methods. Blizzard seized Sora by the fur on her chest and she hoisted her to her height. She pinned Sora against the three and held a sharp icicle to her throat. Sora gulped, very frightened indeed by Blizzard.

"You tell me where your water-panther friend is or I will be forced to run this icicle through your heart!" she roared "This will be your only warning!"

"P-p-please! Let me go, don't hurt me!" whimpered Sora, trying desperately to get free from her tough grasp.

"Tell me what I want to know and I'll spare your puny life little girl!" snarled Blizzard.

"How about I don't tell you and I get away without a scratch on me?" sneered Sora.

Her little whimper had been a distraction while she fumbled around on her utility belt and found the spray bottle that had saved her life several times in the past. She sprayed it directly into Blizzard's eyes, the ice witch roaring furiously as the irritable spray stung her eyes like she was in a chlorine bath. Blizzard let go of Sora and the young spy ran for her life as fast as she could possibly run. Blizzard rubbed her eyes furiously and she growled in rage. She ran after Sora, hoping to catch her before she could tell on anybody. Unfortunately for Sora, Blizzard could run…very fast. Not Sonic or Blaze fast but still fast, her speed on par with an Olympic sprinter. Sora was a fast runner too but Blizzard being taller and having longer legs meant she cleared more distance in a single stride than a twelve-year old girl like Sora would. Blizzard was catching up to Sora and she could almost reach out and grab her tail. But Sora had more tricks up her sleeve then a spray bottle of course. She grabbed an orb off her belt and threw it directly at Blizzard's face. The orb smacked her in the centre of her face, just between her eyes, and Blizzard winced in pain. She ended up tripping up and falling over after that smack in the face from the orb. Blizzard landed on the ground with a sharp thud and pain flared through her knees and face. Blizzard picked herself up, only to see Sora run straight into Sally, Tails, Amy and Cosmo. How fortuitous of the little vixen to run into them.

"Sora! What's wrong?" asked Tails.

"Blizzard the Ice Witch is here and she's trying to make me tell her where Ruben is for some reason!" shrieked Sora "There she is!"

Four pairs of eyes diverted their attention over to the ice witch that lay on the ground before him, staring at them in defeat. She didn't want to get found and yet she'd gotten found out. This mission was a flux for her. Amy stood forward, her face contorting with rage and her hammer already in her hands.

"Blizzard?! You filthy little bitch! What are YOU doing here?!" she snarled, itching to bash Blizzard's head in with her big, beefy Piko-Piko hammer.

"I was just leaving." said Blizzard, taking out a smoke bomb.

She rose her hand in the air and yelled "Ala…KAZAM!" With that, she threw the bomb on the ground and disappeared in a puff of smoke, leaving a furious Amy to moan over the fact she got away and she could get her revenge on her again. Amy stomped the ground beneath her feet in rage.

"Grrrr…that ugly witch got away!" she screeched "Oooooh how I wish we could arrest her and bring her down for good!"

"That's quite enough Amy, we will get another chance someday." said Sally "One thing I have to wonder is…why was Blizzard here?" she thought, her finger to her lips in wonder.

"She told me she wanted Ruben to make a spell of some kind." said Sora "I think she wanted to kidnap Ruben and then use him for a spell."

"Possibly." said Tails "I wonder if Blizzard's the one who took a bit of my fur and a bit of Tails and Cosmo's hair. Maybe she wanted those for the spell too."

"I'll bet fifty-thousand Mobiums Blizzard was the one who took one of my quills!" snarled Amy "It'd be just like her to do something like that!"

"Well, we know who the mysterious "hair-snatcher" is at last. Question is what kind of spell will she be concocting?" wondered Sally "We have to go over to White Acropolis and stop her before she can complete this spell."

"I agree." said Cosmo "An evil witch like her can't possibly be making a spell for any good."

"Shall we get the other Royal Fighters?" asked Sora "I think Blizzard might be tough to beat since according to what I've learnt about her, she's more dangerous in snow-laden territory."

"We'll need all the Royal Fighters for this." said Sally "But…we can't risk taking Ruben with us too. Blizzard wants him for the spell, we can't let her get her hands on him."

"Ah, I have a solution to that." said Tails with a smile on his face "Wait here."

With that said, he quickly ran off back into Royal HQ to fetch something. A minute later he returned as quickly as he had run off and he had something clipped on his wrist. It looked like some kind of watch but there was nothing to tell the time on it, meaning it couldn't be a watch. It was round and silver and had a strap that went around the wrist. It lacked a lot of details, its only feature being a single glowing light on the top.

"Allow me to introduce…the phase shifter." said Tails "Remember when we were captured by Dr. Finitevus I said "I'm gonna build a device that allows us to phase throw solid matter"? Well, that's what I've done. I spent the two weeks in-between building this little gadget and unfortunately, other things such as the mission in Megapolis and other recent events have kept me from testing it since I didn't have time. Now is the perfect time to test it."

Tails turned the dial atop the device and the light turned on, meaning it was activated. Nothing seemed to happen though.

"Cosmo, touch me." he ordered.

Cosmo obeyed and she placed a hand on Tails' shoulder. To her shock, her hand went straight through his shoulder! Cosmo gaped and she quickly took her hand back from him. Tails just smiled, pleased to see that his invention worked.

"Tails! You're…intangible!" she gasped.

"Exactly." said Tails "That's the idea behind this device. And proper grounding ensures that the user won't phase through the floor. This'll be the perfect thing to stop Blizzard from capturing Ruben. He can come after all."

"Tails…you amaze me." said Sally "You've thought of everything haven't you?"

"Eh, it's just convenient that now is the time we need this." said Tails, turning the phase shifter off "With this on, Blizzard can't touch Ruben at all. Although, and this is a BIG although, he has to make sure that Blizzard never gets hold of the device itself." he warned "If she does, she'll become intangible with him and might be able to prise it off of Ruben. He MUST keep the wrist he wears it on away from Blizzard at all times."

"I'll make sure he gets that little brother." said Sora "I'll just go and get the others."

"OK then Sora." said Sally "Don't expect to find Sonic, Wilson or Mandy though. Mandy's been kidnapped and Sonic and Wilson are going to save her."

Amy, Cosmo and Sora all gasped upon hearing that.

"Oh no…Mandy's been kidnapped. By who?" asked Amy.

"A group of rats." explained Tails "We'll explain later. Sonic and Wilson are on the case so we don't need to worry about that now. We have to stop Blizzard before she can make her spell."

The others nodded and Sora ran off to round up the rest of the Royal Fighters. This mission was going to be a tough one since Blizzard was a big threat when surrounded by snow and very hard to get a hold of. But if it meant the safety of all Mobians and stopping a maniacal witch, then it was a risk worth taking…

Footnotes:

*See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 96-97

** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 161 for the whole story

*** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 116-119

**** See Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 52

Well Blizzard's been caught red-handed and is going to get a home invasion next time. Will the Royal Fighters arrest her or will Blizzard simply freeze them all? Find out next time...

Oh and yeah, I'm using the phase shifter from Transformers Prime. Sue me Hasbro. LOL

A Bitter Snowstorm 2

Arc 21: A Bitter Snowstorm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 161-163

Part 2: Home Invasion

The icy cave that Blizzard the Ice Witch occupied had been silent and undisturbed all the while she had been away and now all of a sudden, it was alight with a purple glow that broke away the darkness, throwing light all over the room as it glowed. The light died down and Blizzard materialized into existence, her place of materialization directly beside her cauldron, which had practically frozen underneath and the liquid already in the cauldron was a chilling icy blue colour that was starting to freeze over. Blizzard broke some of the ice away and she stirred the liquid around with her hands to get it moving again. Blizzard had been on a little shopping trip. She had a spell to conduct and the spell was one that was going to give her what she wanted, total control of New Mobotropolis. Trouble is, she had some ingredients missing and thus had gone to the city itself to get them. She got a bit of fox fur from Tails, a bit of leaf from Cosmo, a quill from Amy and there was one more ingredient she needed but she had failed to get it, a piece of an elemental Mobian. Blizzard had been caught in the act thanks to her blowing her cover trying to interrogate Sora and had been forced to flee back to her home in White Acropolis. Blizzard put the ingredients, which were stored nicely in capsules, on the ice block counter where all the other ingredients were and she growled to herself.

"I blew it, I went and blew it!" she ranted, throwing icicles around the room in rage "I was so close to completing my task and I blew it! Oh I really need to learn to control this temper of mine, it's doing nothing but getting me into trouble! How will I ever become the new Queen of New Mobotropolis if I continue to act like this?!"

She let out a heavy sigh and ran her hand down her face, breathing quite harshly on it as if it was really cold and she needed to warm it up (as if she does, she's always cold and the cold doesn't bother her).

"At least I got three of the four ingredients I needed." said Blizzard, eyeing her newly acquired ingredients that lay on the counter, waiting to be used for the spell "I just need a piece of an elemental Mobian and I'm done. If it wasn't against the code of the Ice Mobians to use parts of themselves for a spell then I'd all too happily take a quill off and use it, it would be so much easier."

She trailed her elegant fingers down one of the quills that ran down the side of her head and over the front of her shoulder tenderly, feeling the fur all around it with her fingertips.

"As is, I cannot use a piece of myself for the spell." she sighed "I refuse to break the code of the Ice Mobians. What a stain on my mother's memory it would be to do something so immoral! No, I need another elemental Mobian instead. Let's see…"

The room fell into an ominous silence as Blizzard pursed her lips and thought over what she could do about this. She racked her brain and paced around her cauldron in thought.

"The water panthers are still alive, they flourish in Chun-Nan so there's no way I'd be unable to find one of those." she mused to herself "The fire cats are rare but they can be found somewhere near Black Acropolis. That place would be death to me so I will not look for a fire cat. The Wind Swans are extinct and I have no idea on the fate of the Earth Rhinos. Are they extinct or just really rare? The best thing to do would be to get a water panther. I'll probably take just a bit of fur from them, it'll hardly be missed and I'll get away easily without being caught."

Blizzard then thought of something. She summoned the spell book from nowhere with a snap of the fingers and she quickly leafed through it. She wanted to make double sure she knew what she needed and so she found the page that had the spell she was wanting to make. She japed it with a stiff finger and gasped.

"Aha! I thought I misread something!" she gasped "I don't just need any piece of an elemental Mobian…I need a certain piece of them! It seems to say that in order for the spell to work…" she mused as she read it "I need a limb, an organ or, the most recommended of them all, an item of theirs. I don't want to rip a water panther apart for the spell, that'll draw the attention of the Royal Fighters. An aqua collar will do just nicely and given the water panthers can just make new ones, they'll hardly be missed."

Blizzard closed up the spell book, now knowing exactly what she needed to do. Go to Chun-Nan, find a water panther and steal their aqua collar. It was all she'd need for the spell. She went over to the counter and got out a spare smoke bomb, her primary method of fast travel. She took it in her index finger and thumb and prepared to throw it down onto the floor. Once she did that, she'd disappear in a puff of smoke and be off to wherever she wanted to go. And that place was the natural habitat of the Water Panther race.

"I just hope there's no impudent Royal Fighters in Chun-Nan that I could potentially run into." she murmured "I can do without more of them bothering me."

She was about to throw down the smoke bomb until suddenly, her cauldron began to bubble furiously as if a flame had just randomly erupted underneath it and started heating it up. This wasn't because of heat though; it was an alarm system that was unique for Ice Wizards and Witches. Whenever somebody intruded, the cauldron would bubble furiously and it was hard to ignore when it happened. Blizzard ran over to the cauldron quickly and she dunked her hands into the liquid. She began to swirl the liquid around and around and stared into it as if she was meant to see her reflection in it.

"Double, double, toil and trouble, liquid swirl and cauldron bubble!" Blizzard chanted "Reveal thy intruder, reveal thy face. Who dares to trespass among the habitat of the Ice Mobian race?"

The liquid swirled around and around as if a whirlpool was somehow building up in it. Blizzard watched as the swirling vortex of liquid began to change into an image of the outside world that lay above the cave. Blizzard was underground so whatever the cauldron was showing her would like be taking place above ground and it showed

too for Blizzard could see carpets of snow stretched out for miles around and the light of day gently shining over it, turning the snow into carpets of sparkling diamonds. The image the cauldron created filled the entire surface of the liquid and Blizzard could quite clearly see that the cauldron was showing her who the intruders were. They were the remaining Royal Fighters, the group consisting of Queen Sally Acorn, her lady-in-waiting Nicole the Lynx, Miles "Tails" Prower, Sora Prower, Amy Rose, Cosmo the Seedrian, Cream the Rabbit, Geoffrey St. John, Bunnie Rabbot and the one person Blizzard needed more than anybody else right now, Ruben the Water Panther. The team was incomplete for Sonic the Hedgehog and Wilson the Dog had gone to save the recently kidnapped Mandy Mouse, Mandy herself now in rat captivity* and Knuckles and Shade the Echidnas were on Angel Island doing their duties as guardians right now. It made no difference though, Blizzard still had plenty of foes to deal with and out of all of them, only one mattered, Ruben. Blizzard smiled to herself and she swiped at the contents of the cauldron, making the image disappear.

"How fortuitous. The Royal Fighters have brought their little water panther friend directly to me." she purred, pleased to see that things were looking up for her even after her little mess-up that got her caught earlier "And since I'm in my own territory, capturing the water panther will be as easy as it can get. My spell will be successful after all."

She put her arms to the side and she began to slowly sink down into the icy floor that she stood upon, as if she was melting into a puddle directly above it. Blizzard disappeared down into the ice, leaving no trace of her existence behind. It was as if she had never been back at all. And when she was ready, Blizzard would emerge from the surface and seize Ruben. Then once she got Ruben, she would take him back to her cave and use whatever piece of him she can to make her spell complete. With her spell complete, New Mobotropolis would be hers for the picking…

Outside in the breezing winds and the chilling snow, the Royal Fighters trekked through the deep snow that blanketed all of White Acropolis and stretched for miles around. The snow itself was very

deep; the actual depth of the snow being anyone's guess but the Royal Fighters didn't really care about that now. They weren't here to measure the depth of snow up in the mountains, they were here to capture Blizzard the Hedgehog and arrest her for good, as well as stop her spell since Sora had told the team that Blizzard was making one. After the team had been rounded up and everybody got dressed up in winter gear to keep them warm in the cold of White Acropolis, they had immediately set off for the frigid wasteland to find Blizzard. Everybody wore thick winter coats with hoods on them and Royal Fighters like Sally, Nicole, Cosmo and Bunnie put on some gloves to keep their hands warm, Sally herself swapping her normal fingerless gloves for proper winter gloves. It'd be hard for the Royal Fighters to fight if they were too cold to do so. Sally had already clipped on the blade emitting wristbands that Tails had made for her and she made sure she didn't have her fists clenched so she wouldn't accidentally activate them. She could hardly wait to use them on Blizzard. Nicole had armed herself with a broadsword that came straight from Castle Acorn's royal armoury, an armoury most commonly used by the guards of the castle. Nicole had taken a sword with her for in case she'd need to break anyone out of any possible ice Blizzard could freeze her comrades in or even break *through* any ice they'd need to. Cosmo and Cream had their new weapons that Tails had made for them, Amy, Geoffrey and Bunnie had their usual weapons, Sora had her gadgets and Ruben wasn't armed with anything but the phase shifted that Tails had made. Ruben was to wear it in order to prevent Blizzard from trying to kidnap him while they were here. Ruben was pretty disturbed to hear that Blizzard wanted him for a spell. Why would she want him in particular? That question was the thing that was truly making Ruben shiver, not the bitter cold that bit around his face. He was trudging through the snow behind Sora and he decided to ask her something.

"Hey Sora, what do you think Blizzard wants me for her spell for?" he asked, lightly tugging her tail.

"I don't know Ruben." said Sora, her face full of concern for the young water panther mostly in part to the fact she had a crush on him "That's what worries me. Why would someone like her want to use you in a spell?"

"Maybe I'm one of the ingredients she needs for the spell." said Ruben grimly "But why me in particular?"

"I dunno, I'm guessing she needs a water panther and you just happen to be the unlucky candidate." said Sora, her feet going scrunch in the snow as she plodded through it as hard as she could "I do hope she's not planning on killing you in order to do her spell though."

"I hope not too!" gasped Ruben "She's not taking my life just to make a spell! Though I do have to say, I am surprised to hear that she's an Ice Witch. I thought Ice Mobians were extinct."

"They're very rare now Ruben, Blizzard being one of the few surviving ones left." explained Sora "How do you know about them?"

"I learnt about them in a story mother would tell to me a lot." said Ruben "There was once an elemental war between Water Panthers, ice Mobians, Wind Swans and Fire Cats." It happened centuries ago and is the first ever Mobian war ever recorded in history. The war tore all the species apart and for the sake of survival, they declared a truce and never bothered each other again. Unfortunately, the Wind Swans went extinct after they tried foolishly to take over the world for reasons long forgotten over time. The Ice Mobians never really recovered from the war and the Fire Cats are relatively rare but not as rare as Ice Mobians and the Water Panthers flourish, being the best survivors from the war. Say, did you know that Water Panthers used to know magic?" he added.

"Oh really?" gasped Sora in surprise. She never would have guessed that Ruben's race was once magical.

"Really. We however relinquished our magical heritage since magic is what started the whole elemental war in the first place and we did not wish to remind ourselves of such a terrible war. That's pretty much what the first water panthers would have said. It was magic however that made us what we are. We used to be ordinary panthers but a wise old mage once made up a spell that created a collar and the collar granted the wearer water powers. The spell itself was made up by accident. The mage made more of the collars for the panthers and thus, we became the water panthers. Even

though our magic heritage is gone now, the only spell we are able to conduct is how to make a water collar and even then, only the clan bride or clan leader ever learns it. The bride or clan leader also learns how to omit the need of a collar when the student proves worthy of not needing to be hindered by it. That too is a spell. The bride passes the spell onto her offspring and then the offspring take over the clan and recite the spell to make new collars for new panthers and then passes the spell onto the next offspring and so on. Had mother still been alive, she might have taught me how to do that spell…" he said, his face falling as memories of his mother came back to him.

"Aww…" said Sora, feeling sorry for her love "That's too bad. Sorry to hear that. Oh well, you don't know magic so I doubt Blizzard will want you for that."

"Yeah but it could be possible she thinks I know magic or something." said Ruben "I'm sure she knows about the water panthers and their history what with being an elemental Mobian herself…"

"Well you needn't worry cute stuff, Tails gave you that phase shifter to stop her from getting you." said Sora, taking note of the shiny device that Ruben wore on his right wrist "A simple turn of the knob and she can't touch you."

"I know, Tails is cool like that isn't he?" chuckled Ruben, looking at the phase shifter and smiling at it, eager to put it to use once the time was right "He's quite a little genius."

"Yeah, no wonder I'm proud to be his sister." said Sora with a smile that made her look quite lovely to Ruben.

Sora's smile was prettier than a sunbeam the water panther often thought about her. Pity he was too shy to admit his true feelings for her. Ruben knew he'd muster up the courage someday, but not right now. Now was no time for lovey-dovey after all. This was a time for capturing a villain and stopping her from commencing with her evil plans. Tails, who was a few paces ahead of Ruben and Sora along with the others, seemed to be wondering how Sora and Ruben were so he turned around and called over to them.

"Hey sis! How are you and Ruben back there?" he called to them.

"We're fine little brother!" Sora called back "Just chatting that's all. What's it like up ahead?"

"Just very snowy Sora, nothing much." said Tails "Given this is Blizzard the Ice Witch, we could be walking around for quite a while."

"I hope we find her soon!" whined Amy "I'm getting fed up of trekking through this heavy snow and I'm itching to give her a migraine!" she added, swinging her hammer around menacingly. She should have remembered that she was surrounded by her friends and she came close to hitting them accidentally.

"Amy, put that thing down for heaven's sake!" shrieked Nicole as the hammer whooshed past her shoulder "You're supposed to be using that on Blizzard, not us!"

"Oops, sorry." said Amy, containing herself quickly "It's just… Blizzard makes my skin crawl and whenever she's involved, it's hard to keep my temper under control. Just thinking about her makes me cringe!"

"I understand more than you realize Amy." said Nicole sadly "I've read all about Blizzard's deeds and how she killed your parents, stripped you naked and left you to freeze to death just out of spite. It was just horrible what she did to you."

"I know, that's why I hate her so much!" growled Amy "When I see her, I'm gonna crack her skull open you see if I don't!"

"That'll be a charming sight for the kids…" muttered Nicole sarcastically as she pictured Amy literally cracking Blizzard's head open like an egg. The mess she made would mentally scar the kid members for life.

"Oh yeah, uh, best not do that then." said Amy, sweat-dropping nervously as she realized that she couldn't be too gory for the sake of the children.

"Agreed." said Nicole, turning her head and looking at Sally "So

Sally, in idea where Blizzard might be?"

"I'm guessing any possible ice caves that could be around so I'm looking for those in particular." said Sally, rubbing her face with her gloved hands to get the cold out of it "There's nowhere for Blizzard to stay other than a cave. She won't bother with the villages I bet so she'll very likely be in a cave."

"Good guess." said Nicole "There'll likely be many caves to look in though, we might be looking for a while."

"If we have to tear this place up piece by piece in order to find Blizzard then I'll happily go with that." said Sally determinedly "She's evaded her penance long enough, it's time she paid for it."

"Whoa luv, that's a bit extreme isn't it?" chuckled Geoffrey St. John, slightly uneasy about Sally's determination to catch Blizzard.

"Blizzard was meant to be incarcerated eight years ago and she's still on the loose Geoffrey, so I hardly think its "extreme" to want her arrested." said Sally coldly "And let's factor in the fact she's making a spell. That's potentially deadly. She needs to be stopped before she can put that into fruition."

"Ah agree sugah, a witch as evil as her can't possibly be planning anything good with those spells of hers." said Bunnie "Ah just dread to think what kind of spell it might be…"

"I don't even want to think about it." said Sally tersely, shuddering as if the cold had slipped down her coat and started channelling through her sleeves.

The group fell silent as they continued to walk on through the snow in search of any caves Blizzard could be hiding in. They could look all they liked though since Blizzard wasn't in any caves right now, she was lurking under the snow and waiting for the perfect moment to come out and strike. Blizzard had been under the snow for quite a while now and she had decided to come up for a moment and see if she was any closer to the Royal Fighters or if she had missed them at all. Blizzard ascended up and began to rise out of the snow like a demon rising from the pits of hell. She only stuck her head out of the

snow though, keeping the rest of her body submerged until she thought it was OK to fully come out at all. Her white fur allowed her head to camouflage perfectly against the blanket of snow that surrounded her. The icy blue markings on her head would ruin the disguise slightly but not all that much. Blizzard looked around where she had just stuck her head out of and she saw that the Royal Fighters were trudging slowly through the heavy snow that went scrunch every time their feet ploughed through it. She was on the side of the path they were taking. If the Royal Fighters happened to pass Blizzard, they'd mistake her for a pile of snow most likely and just walk by without them noticing. Blizzard smiled to herself. She had found them and they were coming her way. Now was the time to kidnap Ruben and get what she needed for the spell. Blizzard's head sank back down into the snow like some creepy shadow trick by a voodoo artist and now Blizzard was under the snow again. Blizzard edged under where the Royal Fighters were beginning to walk and she waited as they walked overhead. She could hear the scrunch of the snow as their feet sank down into them. She had observed the team and noticed that Ruben was at the back with Sora. She timed her operation until eight people walked by. She heard two more footsteps coming and she remembered that Ruben was on her right hand side so she knew who to reach out and grab. Her hand shot up out of the snow and she seized Ruben by the ankle, the water panther shrieking in horror as if a horrible creature had just jumped out to grab him.

"AAAAARRRRRGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHH! Something's grabbed me!" screamed Ruben, trying to shake the hand that had grabbed his ankle off furiously.

Sora turned around and gasped in fright, noticing the white hand with the icy blue fingernails that had grabbed her secret crush. She knew it was Blizzard who was doing this and she acted quickly before Ruben could be pulled down.

"Turn on the phase shifter now!" cried Sora.

Ruben didn't wait to be asked twice. He turned the dial atop the phase shifter and watched with glee as Blizzard's hand suddenly passed straight through his ankle like a fist through water. Ruben couldn't help but laugh at Blizzard as her hand scrambled around,

trying to grab him uselessly as it kept passing through him like he was no longer a solid shape.

"Ha, ha, ha! How can you kidnap me if you can't touch me?" sneered Ruben, sticking his tongue out at Blizzard's hand.

The other Royal Fighters had heard Ruben screaming and they ran over to see what was going on. What befell them was a rather comical sight as a hand that had risen from the snow beneath them tried to grab hold of Ruben only to keep passing through him with every swipe. Tails could hardly contain himself, he burst out laughing for two different reasons: joy for the phase shifter working so beautifully and mockery for Blizzard's useless attempts to grab hold of him. The hand seemed to have had enough trying to grab Ruben and fail miserably and Blizzard herself fully rose out of the snow, showing herself to the Royal Fighters. Her face contorted with rage.

"You pesky water panther! I won't allow you to get away so easily!" she growled, swiping at Ruben and trying to grab hold of him.

Her hands passed through Ruben's neck as she tried to throttle him. Blizzard just gasped as her hands phased through Ruben, the panther nothing more than a ghost now because of the phase shifter.

"Impossible! Water panthers don't know magic anymore!" she gasped, retracting her hands from Ruben and putting them to her mouth in shock "How…how are you doing this you impudent child?!"

"As if I'm gonna tell you that." sniffed Ruben "You want to kidnap me and use me for a spell and I'm not gonna let you touch me! Why do you want me?"

"Because you my boy are the last thing I need for my spell!" snarled Blizzard "I need a limb, an organ or a mystical item from an elemental Mobian and you happen to be the closest one to me so I'm gonna take something from you! I do not wish to dissect you for the spell though, I'm just going to take your aqua collar and that'll be it!"

Ruben gasped and he put his hand over his collar in horror. Blizzard wanted his collar?! He'd lost it before thanks to the treacherous Hydra and it had remained in the hands of Conquering Storm until her rule over Chun-Nan had been stopped**. He had been determined never to lose his collar again so the fact Blizzard wanted it made him instantly nervous.

"You…want my…collar?!" he squeaked.

"You won't get it!" growled Sora, standing defensively in front of Ruben and glowering at Blizzard "Ruben's collar gives him his power, you will not take it away from him!"

"Given how the child's somehow become intangible, I can't get it off of him anyway!" snapped Blizzard "However…"

She then suddenly lashed out and grabbed Sora by the collar of her coat. She hoisted Sora up off her feet and held her as tightly as she could. Sora squirmed in Blizzard's grasp.

"Hey! Put me down! Put me down right now!" yelled Sora, punching Blizzard's arm to try and make her let go of her.

Blizzard ignored Sora and then she summoned an icicle to her hand. The icicle was long, thin and very sharp like a dagger and she held it directly over Sora's forehead. Sora grew nervous. Would Blizzard impale her through the head with it? Blizzard glowered at Ruben, her hand poised to make the stab.

"Surrender your collar or I'll kill this girl!" snarled Blizzard "This will be your only warning!"

"You put my sister down right now!" screamed Tails.

"Be quiet boy!" snapped Blizzard "So Ruben, which will it be? Your collar? Or the girl?" she purred menacingly, jabbing Sora's forehead with the icicle and itching to kill the helpless spy that she held firmly by the coat.

"Ruben, don't cede to her demands!" cried Sora "I'm not worth letting Blizzard finish a spell for!"

Ruben was in torment. He had no idea what to do. Should he let Blizzard kill Sora or should he give up his aqua collar? Ruben already knew the answer to that one, he would relinquish his collar for Sora's life. He deeply loved the little vixen and would be torn if he let Blizzard kill her. His collar was not worth more than a life and he would happily sacrifice his magical heirloom for Sora. Then Ruben suddenly realized something. What happened if he touched somebody while the phase shifter was still on? Would they become intangible too? Ruben suddenly had an idea. He glanced at the phase shifter, the device hidden in his sleeve to prevent Blizzard from seeing it. It was risky, but it was worth a shot. Ruben walked up to Blizzard and he took off his aqua collar.

"OK, I give up my collar. Just please spare Sora." said Ruben pleadingly "I couldn't bear to let her die."

"No Ruben please, don't give up to Blizzard!" cried Sora "You'll doom us all if you let her complete her spell!"

"If her spell means the end then I don't want to see the end without you beautiful." said Ruben "I'd rather see my final hour with you."

Sora was amazed at this. Ruben really seemed to care about her didn't he? Could it be that he loved her like she secretly loved him? That made Sora feel touched and very happy. So happy in fact she almost forgot she was being used as a hostage. Blizzard just pulled a face at this.

"One would think you kids were too young to be in love." she sneered "OK Ruben, give it here!" she snapped, demanding the aqua collar with a curl of the fingers.

"How about…no?" said Ruben, lashing out and grabbing Sora by the tail.

The phase shifter's ingenious capabilities allowed the user to phase through what they wanted, thus if Ruben wanted to phase through Sora then he would do so but he didn't want to phase through Sora so his hand was allowed to grab Sora's tail. Then just as he hoped, the phase shifter's ability spread down Ruben's arm and through Sora's body, making her intangible too. She fell straight out of

Blizzard's hand as she suddenly became untouchable and she landed on the snow, Ruben letting go of her tail so she wouldn't pass through it. Blizzard just gasped at Ruben whereas Sora had a mixture of surprise and relief. Ruben smiled at her, pleased to see his love was safe now.

"WHAT?!" she shrieked "HOW DID YOU DO THAT?!"

"I told you. I'm not telling." snapped Ruben "Now you're gonna pay for threatening Sora's life!"

"Yeah! Nobody threatens my sister!" yelled Tails.

Sally deployed her arm blades, clenching her fists and activating the energy blades that emitted from the wristbands Tails had made for her.

"Royal Fighters, get her!" she commanded, her voice like a female army commander as she gave the order.

Ruben had been in Chun-Nan when Blizzard first attacked and Sora wasn't a member of the R.F.S. yet so neither of them knew Blizzard and Amy's history. It hadn't really been covered in the file Sora read about Blizzard, the most being "She killed Amy's parents and left Amy herself traumatized for a while" which explains why Sora didn't know despite reading about her. Hearing the fact Blizzard had kidnapped Amy and stripped her naked just made them feel sick. Blizzard was worse than they had imagined! As for Amy, she walloped Blizzard with her hammer again, sending the ice witch hurling across the snow and into a rocky slope that loomed on the side of the path. Amy ran over to Blizzard and she hammered her again, the ice witch groaning in pain as the hard hammer hit her and sent pain flaring through her body. Amy tried to hit Blizzard again but Blizzard disappeared down into the snow to avoid her, the hammer missing Blizzard and hitting the rocks instead. Amy knew what Blizzard was up to and she instantly ran back towards the others before Blizzard could try and seize her. Blizzard rose up from the snow and she summoned an icicle to her hand. But this was no icicle; it was a wand, an ice witch's wand. Blizzard didn't often like resorting to magic in a battle since she considered it too cowardly and that magic should be used for other method than winning fights

but in this case, she was too happy to make an exception. Blizzard rose the wand and she muttered some strange words. Then she swiped the wand and the wand summoned icy fists of snow from nowhere and sent them all hurling towards the Royal Fighters. Sally jumped forward and she cleaved through the fists with her arm blades, the blades making short work of the fists as if they were nothing. Blizzard gasped and she put her wand away before Sally could try and destroy it. She summoned an ice sword from nowhere and swung it at Sally but Sally just destroyed it with one swipe of her blades, the ice falling miserably to the might of the energy blades. Blizzard gasped and then resorted to her favourite tactic in battle, use the environment. Sally tried to grab Blizzard and hold her at blade point but before she could so much as touch her, a lump of ice shot up from the ground and sent Sally flying into the air. Bunnie flew up instantly, her rockets melting some of the snow she had been standing on as she took flight. She caught Sally before the queen could come crashing back down on the ground and she lowered Sally down to the ground. Blizzard summoned a snowy fist from the ground and commanded it to punch at the Royal Fighters. Bunnie rose her feet and blazed the snow away with the rockets in her feet. She could almost imagine what Blaze the Cat would be like against Blizzard, the pyrokinetic cat would **melt** Blizzard if she ever met her. Blizzard gasped and she throw showers of icicles at Bunnie, hoping to shoot her down. Bunnie deployed her shield generator and made a force field to stop the icicles from hurting her. While Blizzard was distracted, Cosmo took out her throwing disc, which she had decided to name "The Flower Blade", and threw it at Blizzard. The disc had the blades deployed. Cosmo thought it would be better to use the blades on Blizzard. The disc hurled through the air and it slashed Blizzard across the face, leaving a long red gash in it. Blizzard screamed in pain and she clutched her face, rubbing the stinging cut furiously as the flower blade boomeranged back to Cosmo. Cosmo beamed to herself. It felt good to actually land a decent blow on the enemy for once. Now she would be more useful because of this weapon her beloved Tails made for her. Tails gave Cosmo the thumbs up, showing his approval of her using the weapon and using it well. Cosmo beamed back, pleased she had made her boyfriend happy. Cream decided to use her throwing disc too. She hadn't given hers a name unlike Cosmo. Cream however threw two things at once, one being the disc and the other being

Cheese. Cream hadn't deployed the blades on hers since she didn't want to use the blades. Cheese and the disc both smacked Blizzard in the gut and knocked her clean off her feet, Cheese dancing with joy and the disc coming back to Cream. Cream beamed happily, pleased that she had extra firepower and that it was effect.

"Nice to see that my throwing discs are effective." said Tails happily.

"Indeed." agreed Cosmo "Me and Cream sure used them well didn't we?"

Tails nodded, pleased that his inventions worked as they should and that Cosmo and Cream had used them effectively. Blizzard picked herself up and she growled furiously.

"Right…that is it! You have pushed my patience to the limit!" she roared "I will see all of you frozen at the end of this!"

"I'd surrender if I were you." said Nicole, rushing in and pointing her sword at Blizzard "You can't possibly beat us and the one you want is untouchable. Just give up and make this easier for yourself."

"As if I will do something like that!" barked Blizzard, lightly brushing the sword aside as if it meant nothing to her "An ice witch doesn't give up, especially when she has magic on her side…"

With that said, Blizzard summoned her wand and she pointed it at Nicole. With a yell of the words "Shazam…BANG!", Nicole was blown away by a powerful force that walloped her in the gut. It felt like being punched only much harder. Nicole crashed directly into Sally, the queen standing behind Nicole to catch her, and the two came down onto the ground in a heap. Ruben and Sora decided to land a blow on Blizzard by jumping into the air and kicking her in the face both together. Their feet hit Blizzard where the gash left by Cosmo's weapon was, making it more painful for the white furred hedgehog. Blizzard was still standing though and she threw icicles at the two. Ruben grabbed Sora's hand so the phase shifter made her intangible too. The icicles passed directly through both Sora and Ruben. Unfortunately, Ruben's sleeve had moved up a bit so Blizzard could see the phase shifter on his wrist. Blizzard spotted it and she narrowed her eyes at it.

"What's that on your wrist?" she demanded.

Ruben looked at his wrist and saw that the phase shifter was in plain sight now. Ruben sighed in annoyance but he decided not to tell her what it did.

"It's just a decoration." said Ruben "I wear it as a lucky charm."

"I suspect that to be a lie." muttered Blizzard "I think that thing's making you intangible little boy. And you can give it to me right this minute!"

Blizzard then lunged forward and she seized the phase shifter. The phase shifter made somebody intangible but it did not stop itself from being grabbed unfortunately. Blizzard tried to yank it off of Ruben's wrist but the water panther thought back, making sure that Blizzard couldn't take it off of him. Sora tried to help but unfortunately, touching the phase shifter made Blizzard intangible too so Sora couldn't touch her. Only Ruben could touch Blizzard now and unfortunately, the same went for Blizzard. Only she could touch Ruben. The two struggled for a bit before Blizzard got out an icicle and promptly scratched Ruben on the arm with it, tearing a gash in his sleeve and drawing blood. Ruben yelped, the pain in his arm enough to make him weaken his struggle. Blizzard turned the dial and the phase shifter switched off. She unclipped the phase shifter from Ruben's wrist and she reattached it to her own. Cackling maniacally, she turned it on and gleefully passed an arm through her stomach to see if it worked. Her arm went through her stomach as if she had just become a ghost all of a sudden. She took it back out and she smiled gleefully at the phase shifter.

"This is ingenious!" she cried "A device that makes somebody intangible! Who on Mobius managed to make such an amazing device? It's almost like magic!"

"Give that back to me!" cried Ruben "Tails made that thing and he's gonna kill me for losing it!"

"I don't give a tinker's toot what your buddy "Tails" thinks." snapped Blizzard "This thing is mine now and I intend to keep hold of it."

"Royal Fighters, get the phase shifter back!" cried Sally "She must not be allowed to keep it!"

The Royal Fighters instantly charged towards Blizzard but the ice witch just stood there and waited for the Royal Fighters to come to her. Geoffrey lunged at him but he ended up phasing straight through Blizzard and falling flat onto his face in a pile of snow. He picked himself up and aimed his crossbow at her wrist, hoping to at the most knock the phase shifter off her wrist. But Blizzard had her hands behind her back so Geoffrey couldn't aim for it. Nicole swung her broadsword at Blizzard only for the sword to phase through her as if she was merely a hologram. Blizzard lunged forward and slugged Nicole in the gut. She did not wish to pass through Nicole so the phase shifter didn't make her fist go through her. Nicole was brought down onto her knees by the attack and she fought to get her breath back. Blizzard decided not to play around anymore and she sunk down into the snow as the Royal Fighters lunged for her, trying to get the phase shifter back. This resulted in many of the Royal Fighters crashing into each other comically as Blizzard disappeared beneath them. The Royal Fighters all lay down on the ground in a daze, wondering which way was up. Amy was the first to whine.

"And she gets away AGAIN!" she screeched "Why must Blizzard always get away?!"

"She isn't going to be gone for long." said Tails "She'll come back for Ruben and since she's got the phase shifter, Ruben won't be untouchable and he'll be easy prey for her!"

"Ruben, you have to get out of here." said Sora, putting her hands on the water panther's shoulders and giving him a stern look in the eyes "Run, run away. Run as fast as you can! Don't let Blizzard get you!"

"What good will that do me?!" protested Ruben "She sinks down into the snow, she can reappear anytime! She can easily reach up and grab me no matter how fast I run! And my water will be no use, she'll just freeze it and me with it!"

"I'll fly you out of here." Tails offered "Blizzard can't catch us in the air, you'll be safe up in the sky."

But before Tails could try his plan, Blizzard erupted from behind and she grabbed Ruben by the arms. The water panther screamed in terror and he tried to fight his way out of her grasp but because the phase shifter was still on, his kicking feet just passed helplessly through her. Blizzard cackled at Ruben and she pulled him down into the snow.

"HELP ME!" Ruben screamed helplessly as the snow swallowed him up like quicksand.

He disappeared down under the snow along with Blizzard, his screams drowned out as he disappeared. Sora had made one last desperate grab for Ruben but she was far too late. Her fingers just missed Ruben's ear as he went down into the snow. The vixen immediately screamed out in anguish.

"NOOOOO!" she wailed "She's got him! She's got Ruben! Oh no! She'll complete her spell now!"

"This is all my fault." murmured Tails, feeling sad for Sora since he knew she was very fond of Ruben "I should never have invented that phase shifter in the first place. It would have been better if I just didn't make that thing and that Ruben stayed home where he was safe from Blizzard."

"Little brother, the phase shifter worked so beautifully." Sora protested "Don't say you shouldn't have invented it just because of this. It's just unlucky Blizzard got it that's all. But I have to agree, it would have been better if Ruben just stayed home. Blizzard wouldn't have gotten him and we would have been able to capture her."

"We still can capture her." said Sally reassuringly "Blizzard will be hiding somewhere, we'll find her. I just hope we can find her before she does her spell."

"With the phase shifter in her grasp and the final ingredient she needs…we'll be too late." said Nicole sadly "Ruben can't stop Blizzard from taking his collar and we will never find her in time to stop her. Blizzard has well and truly won this one."

"Not yet." said Sora slyly, reaching down her coat to get another orb

from her utility belt "I managed to slip an orb down that sink hole to join Ruben as he disappeared. Using this camera orb, I should be able to see what the orb sees." she said as she took out another orb and activated it.

This was a camera orb used primarily to see what the orb she'd sent after Ruben could see. Sora pressed a button on the orb and the orb activated a holographic screen that showed her the view of the orb that had gone down after Ruben. From what Sora could see, the orb had ended up inside a room made of ice. In the room was a cauldron full of icy liquid that was waiting to be used for the spell Blizzard wished to make and as the orb swept over the room, keeping to the ceiling so it wouldn't be spotted, it saw Ruben and Blizzard. Blizzard was making a bed of ice and she was restraining Ruben to it by freezing his limbs to the bed. Ruben had no chance of escaping now. Sora could only look in dismay at what the orb was seeing. The other Royal Fighters seemed to share her dismay.

"Ruben's restrained, that collar's as good as Blizzard's now." said Tails glumly.

"Maybe so but I can stop the spell." said Sora "I'll get the orb under the cauldron and set it to self-destruct before Blizzard puts his collar in it. The orb has a good explosive capacity, it'll punch a hole big enough to make the entire cauldron spill all over the floor."

"But knowing Blizzard and her witchcraft, she'll just make another one." said Geoffrey "We're only delaying the inevitable lass. We need to find Ruben now."

"Already sorted." said Sora "Orb, display coordinates." she commanded.

The orb that was hiding in Blizzard's lair did just that. On the holographic screen that emitted from the orb Sora was holding, a map of White Acropolis displayed itself and it showed Sora where it was. Surprisingly, despite being taken straight down into the ground, it wasn't directly below the Royal Fighters at all. The coordinates seemed to be saying that Blizzard's lair was in a cave just north of where they currently were. Luckily for the Royal Fighters, it wasn't very far away, just a good two minutes walk away. Sora smiled

happily to herself.

"They're over there." said Sora, pointing in the direction the coordinates stated the orb was "Should be a cave where the coordinates are."

"Well then let's go check it out." said Sally "Sora, keep an eye on Blizzard and get that orb ready to ruin her spell."

Sora nodded, keeping the visual link between orbs open so she could still watch Blizzard and make sure she was in time to stop her. The Royal Fighters then all headed off in where Sora had pointed. They ran as hard as they could possibly run in the thick snow, desperate to save Ruben in time and put an end to Blizzard's evil plans…

Meanwhile in Blizzard's lair, Ruben had been frozen by the hands and feet to a slap of ice that Blizzard had conjured up with her icy magic. Ruben had struggled as furiously as he could in the grasp of the icy restraints but try as he might, he had no chance of getting away. It was difficult to break out of ice and considering they were in a very cold environment, that just made the restraints even tougher to break. The colder, the stronger as it often is in the case of ice. As Ruben tried to break free, Blizzard was preparing the spell. The cauldron was still freshly chilled so it was perfect for conducting spells in now. Blizzard used a spoon-shaped icicle to stir the liquid around until it was swirling and then after that was done, she began to pour the ingredients into it. First was the pound of crushed ice (the easiest ingredient for many an ice witch to find). She poured in the crushed ice and the ice dissolved in the liquid as if it was a pool of acid swirling around in the cauldron. Blizzard stirred the ice around until it had fully dissolved into the liquid, turning the liquid an even icier colour of blue. Ruben could only watch helplessly as Blizzard prepared the spell. If only he could break free and stop her! If only he hadn't lost the phase shifter then he wouldn't be in this situation in the first place! Speaking of the phase shifter, Blizzard had taken it off for the moment since she was dipping her hands into the liquid a lot and she didn't want to short-circuit the phase shifter. It lay on the ingredients counter, far out of Ruben's reach and safely

away from the cauldron. Blizzard got out the jar of mildew drops and she dropped a few of them into the cauldron. The mildew drops made a tiny hiss as they came into contact with the liquid. Then Blizzard put in the fresh snow, another ingredient that was in reach of the Ice Mobians at all time. The snow dissolved into the liquid, turning it into a cold white colour that made the liquid look as if it was going to freeze all over. Now it was time for the ingredients that Blizzard had needed to steal from the Royal Fighters. She put in the fox hair from Tails, the hedgehog quill form Amy and the bit of leaf from Cosmo and she stirred the cauldron around until the ingredients disappeared into the liquid. They were soon swallowed up by the icy cold watery substance and Ruben knew instantly that it was his turn to be used for the spell now. Blizzard smiled happily at the cauldron and she walked over to Ruben. As she walked towards Ruben, Sora's orb descended from the ceiling and placed itself in front of the cauldron, watching Blizzard and Ruben and waiting for the right moment to self destruct and ruin the spell.

"Now the final ingredient…a piece of an elemental Mobian." she purred "Time for your aqua collar to come off my boy."

Ruben knew that resistance was futile so all he could do was lie there and let Blizzard take his collar. That was when he suddenly came up with an idea. Maybe he could try and stall Blizzard, see if he could stall her and give the Royal Fighters a chance to save find him and save him. Trouble was, how long could he stall her for? He would have to try it and see.

"Blizzard please, you can't use my collar." pleaded Ruben "It's the only thing that gives me my powers. You can't take them away from me! Taking somebody's power away is dishonourable! Surely you have a sense of honour right?"

"My sense of honour is to my Ice Cult and they're all dead now so a sense of honour is meaningless to me now." scoffed Blizzard "And I will happily strip you of your powers if it means conducting my spell."

"Surely you can take another piece of me?" said Ruben weakly.

"Yes, I could take off one of your limbs or even your organs." said Blizzard "But I am not one to dissect people and I don't believe in

killing people I have no ill-will against. I have no qualm against you so I have no reason to kill you child. So your aqua collar will do."

"Please, you can't!" cried Ruben "I won't be a water panther if you take my collar! I don't want to lose what makes me what I am!"

"I missed the part where that was my problem." hissed Blizzard fiercely.

She reached out to grab Ruben's collar but Ruben decided to ask something at the last minute just to distract her further.

"Wait! What is this spell you're conducting and what is it gonna do?" asked Ruben.

Blizzard scowled at Ruben, fed up of the water panther wasting her time already.

"That, is for me to know and for you to bear witness." she said with a voice colder than the ice Ruben was frozen to "Once I complete the spell, you shall see what it does."

With that said, she pointed a finger at Ruben's mouth and lightly drew it across his lips. The result ended up with Ruben's mouth frozen shut so he couldn't distract her any longer. Ruben made some muffled mumbles feebly but he had no chance of talking with his lips frozen shut. Blizzard smirked at him mockingly and then she unclipped the water panther's aqua-collar from around his neck. Ruben had been hoping never to lose it again and now, he had lost it and was probably going to lose it for good. Ruben could only watch despairingly as Blizzard carried his aqua-collar back over to the cauldron.

"Prepare yourself Ruben, for the spell shall now commence!" Blizzard announced "Just drop this collar into the liquid and begin the incantation and then my ice army will come to fruition!"

She held the collar over the cauldron, Ruben squirming madly and making very loud muffles indeed as his collar was about to be sacrificed for the spell. But then Sora's orb self-destructed, creating an explosion that blew Blizzard off her feet (she was right in front of

the orb when it went off) and punched an enormous hole into the cauldron. Blizzard crashed into the wall and lay against it, wondering what had happened. The explosion had left her legs feeling very sore and that she couldn't stand up on them for a minute. The cauldron was worse than her though. A huge hole had been blown into the cauldron and the liquid spilt all over the floor, becoming new ice for the already icy floor as it quickly froze over. Blizzard stared in horror at her ruined spell, her hands to her face in anguish.

"NO! No, no, no, no, NOOOOOO!" she roared furiously "My spell, my beautiful spell! It's ruined! How did this happen?! Why did my cauldron blow up?!"

"I smuggled a little bomb into your hideout Blizzard!" yelled a voice that Ruben was all too happy to be hearing again.

Blizzard turned around and got the shock of her life. The Royal Fighters had finally found her lair and they had just broken into it. They all stood before the horrified ice witch, ready to give her a good beating and to finally throw her in prison for all her crimes. Blizzard was as good as gotten now and Ruben could only make a muffle sigh of relief at the sight of his friends here to rescue him and stop Blizzard…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 161-183**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 116-119**

Blizzard's in deep trouble isn't she? But this is hardly the end yet, there's two more parts to go so stay tuned as things take a turn for the "chilling" worst next time...

A Bitter Snowstorm 3

Arc 21: A Bitter Snowstorm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 161-163

Part 3: Cold Death

"Blizzard the Ice Witch. In the name of the Kingdom of Acorn, you are under arrest for your crimes against the kingdom and its people."

Those were the words of the strong willed and good-hearted Queen of New Mobotropolis, Sally Acorn. She and her fellow Royal Fighters had journeyed to White Acropolis to try and capture the maniacal ice witch Blizzard. Blizzard had snuck into New Mobotropolis using her great magic skills and she had been going around taking bits from Tails, Amy and Cosmo in order to get the ingredients needed for a spell she was planning on conducting. She needed one final ingredient, a piece of an elemental Mobian and not just any piece but a limb, organ or a mystical item from an elemental Mobian, not including the Ice Mobians since they strongly opposed using parts of themselves for a spell. Her unlucky candidate was the Royal Fighter Ruben the Water Panther. She had managed to capture Ruben and bring him down to her lair where she restrained him and took his aqua collar. But little did Blizzard know, the super spy Sora Prower had set up a trap for the ice witch. She had smuggled an orb down into her lair as she kidnapped Ruben and the orb had blown a hole into her cauldron, ruining the spell and saving Ruben's aqua-collar. Now the Royal Fighters had all broken into the lair and they all stood before Blizzard, waiting to take her in and make her pay for her crimes at last, especially Amy after Blizzard traumatized her for a while. As the Royal Fighters surrounded Blizzard, Sora immediately saw to freeing Ruben. Using a laser stick she had on her belt, she cut through his restraints and shattered the ice from around Ruben's mouth so he could now speak again and stand up. His hands and feet felt a little numb but they would soon return to normal. Sora

picked up Ruben's collar from the floor and she handed it to him, the water panther eagerly clipping it back around his neck and hugging Sora gratefully. He was very grateful that the girl of his dreams had managed to stop Blizzard from destroying his most precious possession and source of power. Sora was taken aback by the sudden hug but she was happy to receive it. After all, she did have a crush on Ruben. Ruben suddenly realized what he was doing and he went bright pink in the face, much to Sora's amusement. Laughing sheepishly, he let Sora go and hid his hands behind his back, a wide embarrassed smile spreading out on his face. Over to the Royal Fighters, they surrounded Blizzard and they formed a circle that would surely keep Blizzard from going anywhere. Blizzard just scowled at the Royal Fighters, her anger so apparent that a throbbing vein stood up on her head.

"You ingrates ruined my spell!" snarled Blizzard "I have no idea how that vixen cub managed to sneak a bomb into my lair but mark my words, she will not live to ruin my spell when I attempt it again!"

"You won't get that chance." said Nicole the Lynx, holding her broadsword to Blizzard's throat menacingly "You're going down and if you surrender, we promise we won't be too rough with you."

"I'm not making that promise, I'm gonna be as rough as I wish!" Amy yelled furiously. Of all people, she hated Blizzard the most and really wanted to cave her head in.

"When are you morons going to get the message?" snarled Blizzard "Ice Witches never surrender! I am not finished yet and you forget, you're in my territory so I've got the upper hand here!"

With that said, Blizzard threw her arms up into the air and every member of the Royal Fighters suddenly got smacked up into the ceiling by huge icy hands that shot up from the ground before anybody could register them and try to move out of the way. The ice hands descended back down into the ground like ghosts disappearing into the floor and the Royal Fighters lay their, dazed and winded by the sudden attack. Now they were down, Blizzard instantly ran over to the counter and she grabbed the phase shifter. She clipped it onto her wrist before anybody could stop her and she turned it on. Blizzard was now intangible once again, completely

untouchable to anybody. Amy thundered towards Blizzard like a wild rhino, her hammer raised and ready to strike. Her hammer just phased directly through Blizzard though thanks to the phase shifter's power. Blizzard grabbed Amy by the wrists while her hammer was still through her and she punched Amy in the face. The punch sent Amy hurling across the room and Blizzard now had possession of her hammer for Amy let go of it after being punched. Sally ran towards Blizzard and tried to attack her with her arm blades but her blades passed through Blizzard and Blizzard walloped Sally in the face with Amy's hammer. Sally was thrown onto her back by the punch and Blizzard drew out an ice sword from her hand. She pointed it at Sally's throat, the Queen of New Mobotropolis not daring to move so much as an inch.

"Not only can I use the environment to my advantage but I have your precious phasing device." sneered Blizzard "I'm invincible now."

"That maybe so, but it just proves how cowardly you are." said Sally with a confident smirk on her beautiful face.

"Coward?! COWARD?!" I am NOT a coward!" snarled Blizzard, her rage so furious that it was a miracle she hadn't been set on fire yet.

"Then prove it!" dared Sally "Fight us without the phase shifter and prove that you're not a coward!"

"Says the one whose team mate ended up wearing it anyway." snapped Blizzard, noticing the hypocrisy of the situation "Anyway, I shall omit from using the device if you so please. After all, it's a stain upon an Ice Witch's honour to fight cowardly."

With that said, she turned off the phase shifter but to make sure she couldn't lose it, she made the device disappear into thin air with a snap of her fingers. Sally sighed a little; annoyed she wouldn't be able to get the device back from Blizzard. Oh well, maybe she could try and make Blizzard give it her back when she was defeated. Now Blizzard was no longer intangible, Sally jumped onto her feet and she sliced Blizzard's ice sword into pieces with her energy blades. Blizzard merely summoned a new ice sword to her hands and she swung it at Sally. Sally ducked and she kicked Blizzard in the gut.

Blizzard doubled over in pain but she recovered quick enough to prod Sally in the gut with her sword and then freeze the lower half of her body. Sally was completely frozen from the waist down and she couldn't move. But Sally wasn't stopped for long, she sliced the ice around her waist and legs to bits with a few swings of her blades.

"Boy Tails' new weapons for me are effective!" cried Sally gleefully "These are much better than my staff ever was!"

One would think that a queen as intelligent and logical as Sally Acorn would know better then to fawn over her new toys in the middle of a battle. This allowed Blizzard the opportunity to freeze Sally completely with a simple prod of the sword. Now Sally was completely frozen, she couldn't move and she couldn't cut herself free. Blizzard smirked at the frozen squirrel triumphantly.

"There, I beat you without using the phase shifter." sneered Blizzard "Now I shall freeze your comrades."

Then suddenly, Nicole jumped in and kicked Blizzard down onto the floor with a mighty dropkick to the head that just about knocked her senses out of her. Blizzard was thrown onto the floor by the kick and Nicole saw to freeing Sally while she was down. Nicole swung her sword and cracked the ice as soon as her sword struck it. The ice cracked to pieces and crumbled to the floor. Sally was free and the squirrel queen was more determined then ever to make Blizzard pay for this. Nicole ran towards Blizzard and the two girls clashed swords with each other. Nicole and Blizzard swung their swords and their weapons clashed loudly with each other. Nicole went for a thrust parry move but Blizzard sank down into the floor to dodge the attack. Nicole predicted what she would try and she spun around. Her prediction was that Blizzard would attempt to get her from behind and her prediction was correct. She struck Blizzard across the chest with her sword and the ice witch screamed in pain. A long gash spread out across her chest and her elegant robes were stained red from the blood. Blizzard growled furiously and she summoned her ice wand to her hand. She aimed it at Sally and Nicole and yelled "Shazam…BANG!" What followed next was a powerful fist of energy that threw Sally and Nicole across the room and sent them crashing into the wall. The force was so powerful that the two could barely register what had hit them. Blizzard didn't have

time to savour the victory though, Amy Rose was quick to leap in and walloped Blizzard in the back of her head with her hammer. Blizzard hurled across the room and she crashed into the counter of spell ingredients. Her crash sent many of the contents wobbling about and nearly toppling over but thankfully for her, nothing fell off the counter and smashed to pieces on the floor. It would be pure hell for Blizzard if that happened. Blizzard picked herself up and she aimed her wand at Amy as the furious pink hedgehog came charging towards her like an angry bull. Blizzard yelled the words again and an enormous force punched out of the wand and blew Amy off her feet. Amy slid across the floor and because of the ice; she didn't stop until she came to a crash against the wall. Blizzard prepared to do it again but Cosmo threw her Flower Blade at Blizzard and the four-bladed disc weapon sliced her wand in two. The other end of the wand came down onto the floor with a clink and the Flower Blade returned to Cosmo just as it had been built to. Blizzard gasped in horror and she growled furiously at Cosmo.

"You stupid child! That was my wand you just cut in two!" she growled "I'll make you pay for that!"

"I wouldn't if I were you Blizzard." said Cosmo smoothly "My boyfriend will be very cross if you harm me."

Before Blizzard could retort, Tails flew in and landed a roundhouse kick on Blizzard's head before the ice witch could even make him out. Blizzard was sent spinning dizzily for a minute by the kick but she quickly regained herself and she threw showers of icicles at Tails. Tails dodged all the flying icicles and he flew towards Blizzard. Before he could land a punch on her, Blizzard summoned a fist made of ice to rise up from the ground and punch Tails into the ceiling. Cosmo tried to avenge Tails but Blizzard summoned a wall of ice that blocked Cosmo's attack, the Flower Blade just skimming off the ice and returning to Cosmo's hand. Ruben decided to let Blizzard have it since he had a score of his own to settle with her now. He threw a jet of water at Blizzard and the jet sent Blizzard flying across the room. Water was hardly a bother for Blizzard but jets of water were enough to make her mad. Blizzard picked herself up, waiting for Ruben to soak her again. Instead, Ruben ran in and uppercut Blizzard in the face. He then swept her legs out from

underneath her with a sweep kick manoeuvre that brought her crashing down onto the floor. Bunnie and Geoffrey both picked Blizzard up by her robes and they tossed her into the air. As she came back down, they kicked her both together and sent her flying across the room. Cream added the final insult to this painful injury by flying over Blizzard and dropping down onto her with a heavy kick from both feet, sending her slamming down into the floor. Blizzard grimaced in pain and she forced herself up onto her knees. Blizzard decided to sink down into the floor for she suddenly had another trick up her sleeve. Blizzard sunk down into the floor and disappeared from view, leaving the Royal Fighters wondering where she would show up next. Blizzard reappeared by the spell counter and she snatched up a golden chest-shaped box. She opened the box and took out something that it contained.

"Alright Royal Fighters, you have proven yourselves worthy adversaries!" she barked "But now this battle ends here. I have the one thing that can finish you all off now…the Cold Death!"

She opened her hand and showed what she had taken out of the chest. In her hand was a glowing, mystical looking wisp of energy that had no solid form and looked almost like a flame. The Royal Fighters stared at it, wondering what it was and what it did.

"What's that?" asked Sally, almost afraid she had done so.

"The most deadly piece of Ice Mobian magic ever devised." purred Blizzard "This mystical flame of energy can bring death once somebody is stricken by it. If you want to keep your lives then you will all surrender and allow me the glory of victory or I shall use the Cold Death on you all."

"We won't surrender!" snapped Nicole "And you needing to use that thing just shows you're nothing but a coward! I thought you wanted to prove to Sally that you weren't one!"

"This is not cowardice at all, it's a last minute resort!" snarled Blizzard "It is customary for an Ice Mobian to resort to the Cold Death if the situation desperately calls for it. I'm desperate to win so I need to use it. Now stand down and you won't get to bear the horrors of the Cold Death!"

But Blizzard should have been keeping an eye on the Royal Fighters for her focus being squarely on Sally and Nicole caused her to overlook the fact Amy had sneaked off behind her while she wasn't looking. Amy ran towards Blizzard and she walloped the ice witch as hard as she could in the back of her head. Blizzard yelped in alarm as she was taken off her feet by the heavy hammer that made Amy a force to be reckoned with. But Amy had made a big mistake. Blizzard dropped the Cold Death as she hurled off her feet and much to the bad luck of Sora, the icy entity ended up smacking her directly in the gut! The Cold Death seemed to pop like a balloon as it hit Sora and Sora was thrown off her feet. She had been stricken by the Cold Death! But would it work since Blizzard didn't really use it the way she intended? Would Sora be safe? Sora felt herself all over and much to her delight; she didn't seem to feel any different. Maybe it hadn't worked; maybe Amy had caused it to be a complete waste and Blizzard's deadliest weapon was all for naught. Thus Sora relaxed for the moment and watched as Blizzard picked herself up. Her face was so full of fury that she may as well have been rabid.

"YOU STUPID LITTLE BRAT!" she roared "YOU JUST WASTED THE COLD DEATH AND NOW MY DEADLIEST WEAPON IS A FLUX! YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING NOW!"

"Good!" snapped Amy "You deserved that you heartless monster! You deserved that for what you did to me and my parents all those years ago and you CERTAINLY deserved it for trying to make up a spell that would undoubtedly do horrible things to us all!"

"Now will you surrender Blizzard?" sneered Sally, confident that Blizzard was finally defeated and that she was going to give up at long last.

All hope of that being the case was shattered like a glass chandelier crashing down form the ceiling for Blizzard just sunk down into the ground and disappeared from view like a melting snowman. Sally just stood where she was, dumbfounded at the fact Blizzard had evaded them again and despite all they'd done to her, she still wouldn't call it quits already. What did Sally have to do to make Blizzard give up already? Blackmail her?! Amy however took it a lot worse than Sally. She practically blew a vessel over this and she

began slamming the floor as furiously as she could.

"DAMN AND BLAST THAT ELUSIVE ICE WITCH!" screamed Amy "How many times is she gonna get away from us before we FINALLY catch her?!"

"Amy calm down." ordered Sally "Getting angry isn't going to do us any good. Blizzard got away, we'll just have to try our luck next time. I promise you though, we WILL get her next time."

"I bloody hope so!" snarled Amy "I'm gonna go insane if Blizzard escapes us again!"

"That won't help matters either." said Sally grimly "Royal Fighters, we've failed this mission. Let us return home and plan our next strategy."

"I think that's a good idea your majesty." said Geoffrey "I'm starting to get chilly now, a good warm up will do me some good."

"What should we do about this place?" asked Bunnie "Ah mean, Blizzard might come back and conjure up some new spells if we leave it like this."

"It won't matter, Blizzard can make her home anywhere she likes." said Sally "We can't stop her from having a lair in White Acropolis. We just have to hope she takes a while to make a new cauldron."

Then suddenly, things started to look horribly wrong. Sora was clutching herself and rubbing herself frantically as if she was desperately cold all of the sudden. She shivered furiously, so furiously in fact she was hyperventilating. She looked very uncomfortable and her warm clothing didn't seem to offer any protection against this new and sudden coldness that had come over her all of the sudden. Ruben noticed this and he put a hand on Sora's shoulder concernedly.

"Hey, you alright?" asked Ruben "What's wrong Sora?"

"N-n-n-nothing Ruben." said Sora although she herself wasn't entirely convinced this was true "I-I-I j-j-just feel c-cold all of the s-sudden."

"I think the cold's all getting to us now, even with our warm clothing." said Ruben "Come on team, let's all get home now. Sora's getting cold."

"That's strange, she's dressed warmly and we're all OK." said Tails with an eyebrow raised in concern "Oh well, she'll be fine when we get home and get warm again."

With that said, the Royal Fighters left Blizzard's lair and made off the long journey back home. It was a long walk but they'd be back home in New Mobotropolis eventually and then they could relax and prepare for the next battle with Blizzard. It would be sooner than they thought though for a few minutes after the Royal Fighters left, Blizzard returned to the lair and was pleased to see that it was completely empty now save for her. Blizzard raised her hands and she murmured some strange words that made the entire room glow brightly for a moment. She was conjuring a spell and this one didn't need any ingredients, just an incantation and presto, it worked. The spell was merely just to fix all the damage done to her lair and make a new cauldron full of liquid to make a new spell with. The cauldron resurrected itself in the centre of the room and the liquid swirled around, nicely chilled and ready for use. Blizzard summoned the spell book to her hands and she leafed through it, looking for something new to do.

"Those Royal Fighters ruined my plans so now I'm going to ruin them!" growled Blizzard "In order for my beautiful plan to work, I need to get rid of the Royal Fighters themselves. If I was an expert in voodoo then I'd just make voodoo dolls of them all and kill them using the dolls. Alas, I've got my own kind of magic instead. I'll use this new spell to get rid of the Royal Fighters and once they're gone, I shall commence with the spell I was going to conduct originally. And I have the perfect thing to put an end to those pesky Royal Fighters…"

She stopped on the page she was looking for and read the contents on the page. The page said:

Ice Golem

A powerful ice creature that was once used as a guardian for

the Ice Mobians and as a warrior during the Elemental War. They can be created using this simple spell. In order to create an Ice Golem, you will need:

A pound of crushed ice, two pounds worth of fresh snow, rocks from the mountain tops and the hair of a royal.

Blizzard fumed to herself. She had all those ingredients except for one, the hair of a royal. Blizzard closed up the book and she twisted her face into a smile, mostly forcing that smile onto her face since she was mostly just annoyed now.

"So I'm missing an ingredient again am I?" she purred "Oh well, I know what I'm looking for and since I still have the phase shifter, I'll get it easily without anybody being able to stop me."

Blizzard then proceeded to summon the phase shifter back to her wrist and she turned it on, becoming intangible once again as the device glowed into life.

"Queen Sally Acorn, you will be giving me the last ingredient I need to created my Ice Golem." she crowed, delighted at the very thought of using a lock of hair from the Queen of New Mobotropolis herself to help her complete this spell "Then when the Ice Golem is created, it'll destroy you all and once you're all out of the way, you will not ruin my plans any more…"

With that said, Blizzard descended into the floor, the phase shifter being the cause of it instead of her usual power this time and she disappeared from sight. She would reappear in New Mobotropolis and then when she found Sally, she'd steal a bit of her hair and then use it to create the Ice Golem. The Royal Fighters were finished once that golem was created…

An hour had passed after the battle in White Acropolis and the Royal Fighters had all returned home to New Mobotropolis. The city was exactly as it had been left, indicating no invasions or attacks from any villains while they had been gone. Sally felt much happier seeing New Mobotropolis again, no snow anywhere and nowhere for

Blizzard to just pop up from nowhere and do any harm. What made her even happier was the fact the city was just as they'd left it. Nice to know she could leave the city for a few minutes without something terrible happening in the city. To her dismay, her beloved Sonic the Hedgehog and fellow Royal Fighter Wilson the Dog hadn't come home yet, obviously meaning they hadn't saved Mandy Mouse from the rats yet*. Sally eased herself by telling herself that Sonic and Wilson will return soon. They come back eventually and they'd bring Mandy home safe and sound and maybe even return with news on Kari the Rat's well being too. Sally would feel much more relaxed knowing that Mandy and Kari were alright and that Sonic and Wilson would be coming home soon. For now, Sally had to just be patient and keep her mind at ease otherwise she'd be unfocused and unprepared for Blizzard's next move. Blizzard would be striking again soon and Sally could hardly shake off the doubt that she wouldn't strike again. This was why they had come home after all, to plan how they were going to defeat Blizzard once and for all. But Sally soon had more things to worry about then Blizzard coming back for more for fifteen minutes after the Royal Fighters had arrived home, she heard from Nicole that Sora was still shivering for some reason. Sora had suddenly come over with a chill before they left and an hour and fifteen minutes later, she was still shivering and freezing. This did not sound right at all. It was a bright sunny day in New Mobotropolis and the day was scorching hot. How could Sora possibly be feeling cold in this weather? Sally decided to come over to Royal HQ and check up on Sora to see how she was. In Royal HQ, most notably the rest room of the building, Tails and Ruben were standing over Sora, who was lying on the sofa and wrapped up ever so snugly in a big pile of blankets. Sora was lying under at least three blankets, all very thick and very snugly and warm and yet despite all this, she was still shivering as if she was in an Arctic winter. It was almost as if she couldn't even FEEL the warmth of the blankets! Sora just shivered uncontrollably, looking very distressed and clutching the blankets tightly to her as if fighting to get warm but failing miserably.

"Brrr…p-p-p-please…h-h-help me…I'm s-s-so c-c-cold…" Sora shivered pathetically, trying to keep her speech controlled but failing due to her chattering teeth.

Tails and Ruben felt very worried for Sora indeed. What was up with her? Why was she so cold? HOW could she be feeling cold? It was a hot sunny day and she was lying under three layers of blankets! How could she possibly be feeling cold?! The question drove Tails and Ruben around the twist and at the same time, made them very worried.

"What's wrong with her?" asked Ruben, his lips wobbling and his eyes welling up as if he was going to cry over this "Why is she feeling so cold? She's in a warm city and under warm blankets. It's like she's suddenly incapable of feeling heat."

"I know, and that's what I'm worried about." said Tails "When Amy walloped Blizzard, the Cold Death ended up hitting Sora accidentally. I bet that's the cause of this."

"But how can it?" asked Ruben "It just burst when it hit her. Blizzard wanted to use it on all of us, I'm sure it wouldn't just disappear after hitting one person. Also, Blizzard seemed very upset over Amy costing her the Cold Death so surely it shouldn't be affecting her?"

"Well it is." said Tails "Sora was fine until she got hit by it and after getting hit by it, she's suddenly incapable of feeling warm and just won't stop shivering no matter what. It's definitely the Cold Death that's done this."

"And Blizzard said anybody stricken by it will..." Ruben choked back the tears as he forced his lips to deliver the most horrible three letter word that anybody could ever say "…die. Is…is…gulp…is Sora going to…die?" Ruben whimpered as he thought himself to not cry over this.

"Well it's not called the Cold Death for no reason I bet." said Tails "But since Blizzard didn't use it right, maybe it won't kill Sora. Maybe it'll wear off eventually or something. I'll just see what research says about it."

With that said, Tails ran over to a computer that lay in the corner of the rest room and he instantly got to work on it. Ruben remained by Sora's side, watching the poor vixen shiver uncontrollably under the blankets that fought to warm her up but ultimately just failed

altogether. Ruben felt Sora's forehead. She was as cold as ice. It was as if her entire bloodstream ran cold and Sora had become capable of feeling only one thing…cold. Sora whimpered under the stress her constant shivering was giving.

"Ruben…w-w-what's h-h-happening t-t-to me?" she whined "Wh-wh-why won't I f-f-feel warm? Wh-wh-why am I s-s-so cold?"

"Sssh, it's alright Sora." said Ruben "You'll be fine. Tails is just seeing if he can work out what's going to happen and if you'll recover."

"I h-h-h-hope so." shuddered Sora "I c-c-can't st-stand th-th-this shivering and this f-f-feeling c-c-cold constantly."

"It's breaking my heart just seeing you in discomfort precious." said Ruben, stroking Sora's ice cold hair to try and comfort her "I hope you're going to be alright."

Unfortunately, Tails had finished his research on the computer and as he picked himself up slowly from the computer in an almost zombie-like manner, Ruben instantly knew that something was wrong. Tails' face was already streaming with tears and he looked like he just found out that a relative of his was dying of cancer. In this case, it was pretty much that only something more. Tails collapsed onto his knees and he forced himself to deliver the news to Ruben.

"Ruben…I've looked up the Cold Death…" stammered Tails, hardly able to choke back his streaming tears as he delivered the news "And unfortunately…it doesn't matter how it's thrown or how it hits somebody. All it takes is a sudden strike from the Cold Death and then it happens. According to what I've read, being hit by the Cold Death results in an inability to feel warm no matter how hot it really is, the victim to start hyperventilating and the victim to feel cold to the touch like ice. It lasts for a while, maybe a couple of hours until the victim falls into a coma and then eventually…the victim's heart stops beating. It kills me to say this but…but…my sister is freezing to death!" he gasped, a wail following the painful words that Tails had to force himself to say. He held his head in his hands and he wailed into them.

Ruben was so paralyzed with shock upon hearing this that he his heart almost stopped beating itself! Sora was so horrified to hear she was dying that her heart pretty much nearly stopped already.

"I'm…dying?!" whimpered Sora.

"NO!" screamed Ruben, his eyes streaming with tears along with Tails "No, no, no, no, no, no! Sora can't die, we can't let her die, we just can't! We gotta save her! We've gotta save her!"

He grabbed Tails by the shoulders and practically started throttling him in a crazed state as he shook him.

"Please tell me there's a cure! Please, please, please, please, PLEASE! There must be a cure! I mean, what if Blizzard hit somebody she didn't want to with it by accident?!" screeched Ruben.

"There is a cure." said Tails, his tears still streaming down his cheeks and staining the fur under his eyes "But here's the problem…ONLY an Ice Mobian can cure the Cold Death. Blizzard is literally our only hope for Sora to survive and I doubt she'll be willing to save Sora."

"Then we'll MAKE her cure Sora!" screamed Ruben furiously "We'll capture that Ice Witch and force her to cure Sora even if it costs us our lives! I'm not letting her die now, I'm simply not!"

"I'm up for that." said Tails, wiping his tears away "I refuse to let that witch bring my sister's death. I lost her once, I won't lose her again!"

Sora was very touched to hear this. Two of the loveliest boys in her life were willing to go to great lengths in order to save her from this frozen fate that was pulsing through her veins. Despite how cold she felt, her heart certainly felt warm upon hearing that.

"T-T-T-Tails…R-R-R-Ruben…I'm so g-g-glad t-t-to hear that." Sora said, forcing a smile onto her face "M-m-my b-b-brother and m-m-my g-g-good friend are w-w-willing to do w-whatever it takes t-t-to save me. You're the l-l-l-loveliest boys I've e-e-ever known."

"You're welcome sis." said Tails, hugging Sora and trying not to

shiver as he put his arms around her "You were taken away from me when I was just a baby, I'm not letting Blizzard take you away from me. If I have to drag Blizzard here kicking and screaming to cure you, I'd be all too happy to do that."

"I second that." said Ruben supportively "Tails, is there a way we can prolong Sora's fate? You know, keep her going for long enough until we can capture Blizzard and get her to cure Sora?"

"There is only ONE way to stop Sora from dying." said Tails "According to what I read: the victim has to drink warm water every fifteen minutes and has to drink a lot of it in order to delay the Cold Death's effects. The article I read recommended a bowl full of warm water every fifteen minutes and straight from a boiled kettle. It won't cure her but it WILL delay the inevitable and as long as we keep doing it, Sora won't die."

"Good, very good!" cried Ruben happily "I'll get her some right away!"

Ruben was out of the room faster then you can say "Hey the sky is falling!" and he raced off to the kitchen to get the kettle and boil some water for Sora to drink. It would be painstaking to have to constantly give her a new bowl to drink every fifteen minutes but as far as Ruben was concerned, he would happily become Sora's servant if it meant keeping her alive long enough to get Blizzard to cure her. As Ruben left, Sora just lay back and tried to make herself comfortable despite the constant shivering.

"Wh-wh-wh-who'd have th-th-thought th-th-this is how I g-g-go?" she said weakly "I s-s-survive s-s-some of the m-m-most intense s-s-spy missions anyone c-c-c-can go on and yet I m-m-merely f-freeze to death after g-g-getting hit by a m-m-mystical flame o-of energy."

"Sora, don't say that." said Tails, taking his sister's freezing cold hand into his and stroking it "You are NOT going to die. I won't let that happen to you. Like I said to Ruben, as long as you keep drinking warm water every fifteen minutes, you won't die. We know how to keep you alive for long enough until we can catch Blizzard and make her cure you so don't worry."

"B-b-but w-w-what if we c-c-can't catch Blizzard?" Sora whined pathetically "I-I c-c-can't l-live like this f-f-forever, s-s-stuck shivering and f-f-feeling cold and living o-o-only on w-w-warm water. M-m-my life wouldn't b-b-be w-worth living if I w-w-was to r-r-remain like this."

"Sora, please don't worry. I promise you, I promise you as your loving, caring brother that you WILL be saved." said Tails reassuringly "You will not remain like this and you're not going to die. I promise."

"Th-th-thank you l-little brother." said Sora, touched by how loving Tails really was to her.

Tails just gave Sora a sad smile, wondering how long his poor sister would have to suffer like this before she was finally cured. Hopefully it wouldn't be long, it wounded his heart to see Sora in this condition. He had become very close to her after finding out she was his sister and had been determined never to lose her again. And yet Sora was pretty much on death's doorstep right about now and the only way to keep death from letting her through the door was for her to drink warm water every fifteen minutes. It certainly would be a tough life to live for somebody would have to be on constant watch of her and if she was so much as a minute late, the Cold Death could eclipse her forever. Even at night time she wouldn't be able to go without the water for she could die in her sleep quite easily, not that Sora would ever be asleep given her constant shivering. It was a horrible life that lay ahead of Sora and Tails hoped it wouldn't last long. A minute later, Ruben returned with a bowl of steaming hot water and he carried it over to Sora. The water had been freshly boiled in the kettle and Sora could see the steam drifting up from the bowl. If she could feel the warmth of the bowl, it would be very satisfying for her. Ruben held the bowl to Sora's lips and he lightly tipped it up, the water trickling along the bowl, into Sora's lips and down her throat. It was a good thing Sora was incapable of feeling heat now otherwise she might have a burnt tongue from how hot the water was. Sora gulped down the entire bowl without hesitating and after she'd finished, she lay back and sighed to herself. Her shivering appeared to have lessened a little but not much. The warm water was merely an act of prolonging; it wouldn't do anything more than stop her from dying. Ruben just looked at her sadly.

"She can't stay like this forever, this is no life for a fellow Royal Fighter at all." he murmured.

"I know." said Tails, sharing Ruben's despair "There was once a moment where I was dying and got saved by a miracle**. Sora's pretty much going through the same thing only unlike me where I was dead in an hour after getting poisoned, we can keep Sora alive for as long as we can. I just hope we can get Blizzard and make her cure Sora soon. The quicker her suffering ends, the better."

"I agree." said Ruben sadly.

As the two boys looked sadly at Sora, the door opened up and in walked Sally Acorn. She could read the atmosphere of the room perfectly just by seeing how gloomy Tails and Ruben looked as they knelt by the sofa-bound Sora's side. She could tell that things were looking bad.

"Hello there, how's Sora?" asked Sally concernedly "Nicole tells me she's still feeling cold for some reason."

"Sora's dying." said Tails, his voice straining as he made himself say it "Blizzard's Cold Death hit her back in White Acropolis and I looked up what it can do. Sora will freeze to death unless we give her warm water to drink every fifteen minutes and even then, all we're doing is prolonging the inevitable. If we're to save my sister, we need to capture Blizzard and force her to cure her. Only an Ice Mobian can save Sora now."

"Oh dear." said Sally, looking very shaken to hear this indeed "That's dreadful! Sora will die if we don't get Blizzard to cure her? Well…I guess we'll have to plan an operation of capture. As much as it pains me to use villainous methods such as capture, I will happily resort to said methods if it means saving one of my brave Royal Fighters and one of the finest spies that's ever worked for the Kingdom of Acorn." she said determinedly.

"I'm glad you think that Miss Sally." said Tails "So what will we do?"

"I'll see if my library has any books about Ice Mobians and devise a strategy on how best to capture Blizzard." said Sally "Any info I find

might be useful. I'm sure I'll have a book on Ice Mobians somewhere, I can recall reading a book on the Elemental War in the library once…"

Sally's voice trailed off as she turned and left the room to do what she planned to do, leaving Tails and Ruben alone to care for the freezing Sora. They looked at the clock that hung above the window that offered a beautiful outside view of the wondrous city they lived in. It said six o'clock. Sora would need another bowl of warm water at quarter past six. Ruben made sure he kept his eye on the clock so that he wouldn't be a minute late when giving Sora the next bowl of water. Fifteen minutes would feel like forever as Ruben sat and waited and Tails did what he could to comfort Sora. He hoped that Sally would find out the best way to capture Blizzard so they could cure Sora already. She had been suffering for two hours straight now, Tails didn't want her to suffer any longer and Ruben didn't want to lose Sora before he could ever admit that he loved her. It would truly crush Ruben if he never got the chance to say those three words to her…

Meanwhile, Blizzard had reappeared through the floors of Castle Acorn with aid from the phase shifter and she fully ascended up onto the surface. It had taken her a while to find New Mobotropolis but she had made it at last and thanks to the phase shifter, she slipped into the city unnoticed. Not to mention being intangible was less conspicuous compared to disappearing and appearing in a puff of smoke. She turned the phase shifter off and she observed her surroundings. She recognized where she was. She was in Castle Acorn but most notably, she was in the library of Castle Acorn. She had once been given a tour of the castle when she had been a councillor for the Kingdom of Acorn and thus, she recognized the library as if she had been standing in it yesterday. Blizzard couldn't see any signs of Sally Acorn around at all.

"Huh, she's not here it seems." she said "I'd best go into another room."

She turned the phase shifter back on and she walked towards the wall, ready to step through it. But just as she began to pass through

the wall, something caught her eye and she stepped back from the wall. She looked closer at the thing that had caught her eye and to her surprise, it was a book but the eye-catching thing about the book was the title. It said "King Max's Royal Journal". Blizzard was intrigued instantly. She walked over to the shelf with the journal on and she took it off. The book was blue like the Acorn Family's trademark colours in terms of uniform and trimmed with red. The title was written in radiant gold on the spine and the corners had metal tips. The book had a lock on it but Blizzard would see to that easily. The book was quite dusty, suggesting it hadn't been read for a long time and given that King Max was dead***, it would never be used again. Sally had not been allowed to read the journal when Max was alive and Sally certainly wasn't going to read it while he was dead. She couldn't find it in her heart to dispose of the book though given it was a memory of King Max she wanted to have in the library so she had kept it. And now it was off the shelf and in Blizzard's evil, cold hands. She smiled to herself.

"A journal written by his majesty King Max?" she crowed "Oh ho, ho, ho…what serendipity this is. Maybe I can find out any secrets the king may have and if they're dark, evil or embarrassing ones, I can use them to turn the populace against the Acorn Family and make it easier for them to accept me when I take over as queen."

Blizzard stuck her fingernail into the keyhole on the book and she picked at it until it opened. Now Blizzard was free to uncover anything King Max had written about himself during his lifetime. Blizzard eagerly began flicking through the pages for anything that looked interesting. She came across a couple of pages and had read through them only to find nothing of interest. The journal had many entries though, she would surely find something worth reading about. Then Blizzard came across a page that had this date: June 24th 2129. That was fourteen years ago and a whole eight years before Blizzard ever met Amy Rose. Blizzard knew that date all too well. Her hands quivered.

"Th-that's the d-date m-my cult had been killed." she stammered to herself "What's King Max got to say on this day then?"

Blizzard read on and the page told her these words:

Dear Journal,

It gives me great displeasure to say that the murderous Blizzard the Hedgehog has escaped Kingdom of Acorn custody. Her cell had been discovered empty and the glass casing shattered but all the shards coated in ice. It can be assumed she had simply frozen the door and broke it down. Blizzard has not been seen after her escape and it fills me with great anxiety that she might have gone home. I should be happy about this but a terrible thought came over me. What if the vile witch told her cult about us? What if she tried to bring them in to get revenge on us for locking her up after killing one of our councillors? Said councillor had also treated her badly too. Would she tempt her cult to exact revenge on my kingdom for what had happened to her? I cannot shake off the possibilities of that happening so it comes down to one option, prevent the possibility. I am now rounding up a platoon of guards all armed with flamethrowers and firearm weapons of any kind to join me for a mission in Holoska. We cannot allow Blizzard to make her cult our enemies so it is with much regret that we are now leaving the city…to capture her cult. They must all be arrested and imprisoned before Blizzard can ever tell them about us and make us an enemy to them. If they try to resist then they will be killed. I'm not pleased entirely about this but if we're to stop Blizzard from riling her cult up against us then we must make sure it cannot happen. I am leaving now, I shall be back to report the results of the mission. I hope no blood has to be spilled in Holoska…

Blizzard stared at the page she had read in absolute silence. She was so paralyzed with shock that she began to wonder if she'd just frozen into an ice cube for no reason. Blizzard eventually moved after a minute, her hands being the ones to make the first movement. They dropped the book on the floor as their grip released it and Blizzard fought to keep herself from shaking. She had always wondered who had killed her cult and now she knew at last. The answer had been the last thing she had expected. King Max had done it. First he did nothing to help Blizzard deal with Aramis Rose, maybe even being just as afraid of Blizzard as the other councillors, and then he went and did this?! Blizzard now had

more reasons than ever to take over Castle Acorn now. King Max's blind arrogance and senile nature had led to a corrupted kingdom who willingly slaughtered innocent Ice Mobians just out of anxiety! Blizzard could picture the whole carnage now, her whole cult being scorched by flamethrowers and shot to death by the corrupted king and his guards. Even her husband and children had been among the fatalities. She could just hear them crying in fear as some heartless guard pulled the trigger and finished them off. They had received bullet-wounds to the head each, meaning a guard had heartlessly shot two innocent children through the head and all because of a senile old king who was merely anxious over something that may not have even happened. Her husband had been burnt to death. She could just imagine him being bombarded from all corners by flamethrowers until he eventually succumbed to the searing flames. Blizzard's eyes streamed with tears full of different emotions: hate, anger and grief. She now hated the Acorns more than ever and was determined to make them pay for ruining her life forever. Her cult's death had been the breaking point for poor Blizzard and King Max had been the one to swing the hammer into the glass. After fourteen years, she finally knew who was responsible and her desire to conquer New Mobotropolis now grew stronger than ever. Suddenly, Sally entered the library and to her shock, she saw Blizzard standing there, quivering with rage and clutching her fists. Her back was turned but if she was facing forward, Sally could have made out a face full of unfathomable hate.

"Blizzard?!" yelped Sally "Wha…what the heck are you doing in here?! How did you…"

Before Sally could finish the sentence, Blizzard lashed out and pinned her to the wall before the squirrel ever had the chance to react. Blizzard's face contorted with rage, her eyes tiny pupils of anger and her mouth a snarling maw of clenched teeth.

"HOW DARE YOU!" she bellowed **"YOUR FATHER KILLED MY CULT! HOW DARE YOUR FATHER DO THIS TO ME SALLY ACORN!"**

"Wait, what?!" cried Sally "Blizzard, what the hell are you talking about?!"

"DON'T PLAY STUPID WITH ME WRETCH!" thundered Blizzard "Your father King Max is the one who killed my cult and scarred me for life! You must know about this given you're his stupid daughter after all!"

"Blizzard, I don't understand!" protested Sally "What the hell are you talking about?! What do you mean by my dad killed your cult?"

"You really don't know do you?!" snarled Blizzard "Well then, allow me to tell you something you don't know!"

She let Sally go and she picked up the journal from off the floor. She tossed it over to Sally and Sally caught it in her hands. She was horrified to see that it was her father's journal she was now looking at.

"Blizzard! You've been reading my daddy's journal! How could you?!" she said coldly.

"Just read the entry with the date June 24th 2129!" snapped Blizzard.

"OK then." said Sally "You know, I wasn't even born at that date so no wonder I have no idea what you're on about. This is three years before I was born."

"JUST READ IT!" roared Blizzard "Stop wasting time and do as you're told you little wretch!"

Sally sighed and she read the entry that Blizzard had instructed her to read. It's a good thing her father was dead otherwise King Max would throw a fit if he ever saw this. After a minute, she had read the page and she stared at her journal in horror. She could hardly believe what she had just read and as she looked up from the book, she still had a hard time factoring all this in.

It was probably the most incredulous thing she'd ever read.

"Oh dad…how could you?!" Sally gasped, her face paler than a sick person "Blizzard…that…that's horrible! I can't believe my dad did this!"

"I bet you can't you miserable child!" snarled Blizzard furiously, her eyes full of tears again "Your father, the man you looked up to and followed the examples of, had my cult slaughtered in cold blood! You can hardly say that I'M bad just for killing Aramis and Donna Rose, at least I had a good reason for it! Your father however just acted on conclusion instead of handling this properly and now because of his selfish, idiotic ideas…I'm all alone and all without my family! He even took my husband and my children from me!"

"You…were married with children?" gasped Sally.

"I was…but then they were killed along with my cult!" wailed Blizzard, the tears streaming down her face like waterfalls "And you can hardly say that I deserved that! I killed ONE councillor! How does that give him an excuse to kill my ENTIRE cult?!"

"But Blizzard, you have to understand that dad thought you'd tell your cult about this kingdom and get them to reek revenge for what you went through here…" protested Sally.

"Don't you DARE defend King Max!" shouted Blizzard "His conclusion was a delusional idea that his senile old brain came up with! Once I escaped prison, I intended to leave New Mobotropolis forever and move back in with my cult! I would not have breathed **a word** about you all! You weren't worth it! I wanted to forget I ever met you all and try to forget about my murder. But NOOOOOO! King Max had to spoil it all and because of his idiocy, I lost the only thing that could have kept me sane and…I lost my mind with grief. If my cult hadn't been killed Sally, I wouldn't be here right now! I'd be back in Holoska with my darling husband and more adorable children and living my life forgetting you ever existed. And your father took that away from me! With my cult…I have nothing! That's why I'm trying to take over your kingdom, it's the only thing left for me now my life's been destroyed!"

With that said, Blizzard put her hands over her eyes and she wept into them loudly and heavily. Never before had anybody seen Blizzard in such an emotional state. It sure was weird seeing Blizzard crying like this. Sally found herself feeling the strangest feeling she had ever felt in her life…pity and not just pity but…pity for a **villain** . Despite how evil Blizzard was, Sally now fully

understood her more than ever. She was only evil because she had lost everything that was precious to her and had gone insane because of it. Sally also felt a twinge of guilt in her soul. Guilt over the fact her own father had wrecked Blizzard's life over a stupid conclusion that should have had a second thought. Sally now no longer thought of her father as a great man. Because of him, Blizzard was a maniacal witch bent on conquest and all of this could have been avoided. And yet there was a chance that Blizzard could be redeemed. Sally put a hand on Blizzard's shoulder.

"Oh Blizzard, I'm so sorry to hear about all this." said Sally sympathetically "Had I know that this was the reason you're so evil, I'd have done something about it already. And I'm going to do something now. If you renounce your evil ways and come back to the side of good, I'll do whatever I can to make up for what my dad did. I'm sure you can redeem yourself for all you've done Blizzard and if you can, I'll make you a welcomed citizen of New Mobotropolis. I might even make you a Royal Fighter. I read that you joined the Council of Acorn to try and contribute to world peace, well you can help us with that by helping to defeat the villains of the world. If you become a hero Blizzard, nobody will ever fear you or hurt you ever again. If you want to redeem yourself then you must do one thing for me. My fellow Royal Fighter Sora Prower was stricken by the Cold Death and only you can cure her from it. If you save Sora, I will pardon any crime you've committed and allow you to live peacefully with us. What do you say?"

Blizzard took in all of Sally's words and she looked like she might be considering this offer. It did sound quite good after all. And yet…she couldn't really bring herself to forgive King Max for what he'd done to her. Blizzard scowled at Sally and she grabbed the queen by the throat. Sally squirmed in the grasp of the Ice Witch and tried to make her let go, gagging loudly and gasping for breath.

"It's too late for redemption now my child…" growled Blizzard softly "The damage is done. Your council and your father wrecked my life and I can never forgive them for this. So now I will wreck YOUR life to make them sorry they ever messed with me! I'll throw you in the dungeons and leave you to rot and then I shall take over this kingdom and make it my own! And to gain support, I shall be using

what I've discovered to make people scorn the Acorn name and demand for the Acorns to be destroyed! They'll all pity me and take me in as their new queen quite happily! As for your so-called "Sora Prower", she is quite welcome to die as an added bonus! My cult was taken from me so I will take a Royal Fighter from you!"

"Blizzard please, revenge won't solve anything!" cried Sally "I beg of you, please don't do this! You're just making things worse for yourself!"

"My life can hardly GET any worse you little brat!" snapped Blizzard "My life's already over after what happened to my cult! Now's the time to start anew! Before I lock you away though…"

She looked at Sally's wrists and noticed that the blade emitting bracelets weren't there. Blizzard searched Sally's vest and she found them both in a pocket on the inside of her vest. She took them out and dumped them on the floor. Then she gripped a lock of Sally's hair and she plucked it out, making Sally wince in pain.

"…I have the final ingredient for my new spell." purred Blizzard "I thank you for delivering it to me personally. While you're locked away, my Ice Golem shall arise and erase your Royal Fighters for good. Anything related to this corrupt kingdom has to be wiped away and then the Kingdom of Ice shall stand tall in its place. Bet your father would be VERY upset to see this…"

She cackled as she left the library and carried Sally off down the corridor, still holding her by the throat. Sally tried desperately to break free but any attempts at kicking Blizzard were in vain for Blizzard just turned the phase shifter on, meaning Sally couldn't break free. Blizzard stormed down the corridor and she found the castle dungeon. She yanked the door open and she threw Sally down the steps into the dungeon. Sally came to a painful halt at the bottom of the stairs, gripping herself in pain for the stairs hadn't been a very soft ride down for her.

"Goodbye Sally Acorn." snarled Blizzard, slamming the door shut with a loud clang.

She placed a hand on the door and froze it shut, ice forming around

the edges and fusing the door tight shut. It would be a miracle if Sally could break out of it. Sally ran up to the door and tried in vain to open it but it just remained fastened shut by the ice.

"Blizzard, please, let me out!" begged Sally "Please, you're making a mistake! Let me out, let me out!"

Blizzard ignored Sally and just promptly sank down into the floor with the phase shifter. Sally watched as Blizzard disappeared into the floor and then the queen finally admitted defeat. She was alone and trapped in the castle dungeons with no weapons to help her break out and soon nobody would be able to help her. Sally sat down by the door and she cried into her hands, scared and worried on what was going to become of her kingdom now. Blizzard was mad for revenge and she wouldn't rest until the Royal Fighters perished. She would die of starvation down in this dungeon and the Royal Fighters would likely be terminated by Blizzard's Ice Golem. If only Sonic the Hedgehog was here now…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 161-163 for the full story**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 26-27**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 21**

Now that's what I call a cliffhanger! :D So Sally's locked up, Sora's dying and Blizzard's got all she needs for her new spell. Has she truly...WON?! There's only one thing for it...READ THE NEXT CHAPTER! Once it's uploaded that is...(lol)

And yes, I know, I'm ripping off Frozen. So what?! I love that movie! It deserves a homage in this story! ;)

A Bitter Snowstorm 4

Arc 21: A Bitter Snowstorm

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 161-163

Part 4: Acorns & Ice

It should come as to no surprise that a snowy blizzard was blowing through the mountains of White Acropolis as usual. White Acropolis was a place that had only one season, winter. Blizzards, snowstorms and snowfall were just perfectly natural to White Acropolis and anyone living there was perfectly suited to this eternal winter that they lived in. It was a miracle if White Acropolis ever had a sunny day there, not that the heat of the sun would be enough to make a difference even when it did come out. After all, it was colder higher up then down below, a curious fact to many an individual who pondered on such a thing. White Acropolis was also the place of exile for the mentally tormented Blizzard the Ice Witch. Wronged and feared by the Kingdom of Acorn over many years as well as losing her cult to King Max and his men had left her unstable, insane and very bitter towards the kingdom and now she was going to take it over and make it pay for wrecking her life like this. First one of their councillors had bullied her to the point she killed him and then after escaping prison, King Max and a bunch of guards had gone out to capture her cult to prevent Blizzard from riling them up against the kingdom, something she didn't even so much as THINK about doing! The result ended with the cult being slaughtered and Blizzard being traumatized for life. She had spent eight years not knowing what had happened to her cult and only just now had she found out about it thanks to a sneaky look in King Max's journal. The revelation had been shocking to her and now she was determined more than ever to conquer the kingdom. She had already locked Queen Sally Acorn up in the dungeons and left her there to rot and now worse things were going to happen. Blizzard was conducting a new spell, one with which she had stolen a lock of Sally's hair for. This spell was going to make a monster, but not just any monster.

An Ice Golem, ice creatures coined up to act as guards during the ancient years of the Ice Mobian race. The Ice Golem was meant to kill all the Royal Fighters. At first Blizzard saw it as just stopping them from being a problem, now she saw it as wiping away anything to do with the Kingdom of Acorn. It had ruined her life and now she was going to wipe it away like a stain on the table being wiped away by a cloth. Some may see this as revenge but Blizzard saw it for what it truly was: justice. She had been wronged by the kingdom too many times in the past, now was the time they paid for it. Blizzard poured in all the ingredients she needed for the spell, saving Sally's lock of hair for last and the contents all dissolved into the cauldron which had long since been repaired after Sora Prower had blown a hole in it. Speaking of Sora, she was unfortunately dying thanks to Blizzard's deadly weapon, the Cold Death, accidentally hitting her after Amy Rose had hammered Blizzard in the head and made her drop it. True Tails and Ruben were keeping her alive by giving her warm water every so often but what good would it do them if they couldn't cure her? Sora would just be living a freezing life, a life so horrible that Sora would likely lose interest in living and just want to die already to put herself out of her misery. Blizzard just grinned over the thought of the poor, pitiful child freezing to death thanks to her special weapon. How heartbroken Sally would be to see one of her precious Royal Fighters dead. Well her father had killed her cult so it was only fair Blizzard killed her Royal Fighters. Turnabout is fair play as it is commonly said. Blizzard got out an spoon shaped shard of ice and she stirred the contents around in the cauldron until the liquid became a swirling whirlpool of ice cold liquid. As Blizzard stirred it, she began to chant some very strange words that sounded foreign to everyone on Mobius. Only an Ice Witch would know what the words meant. These words were the beginning of the incantation that would start the spell. As Blizzard chanted, the liquid in the cauldron began to glow a brilliant icy blue colour and the swirling whirlpool in the centre seemed to become a vortex. Blizzard smiled and she waved her hands over the cauldron. The rest of the incantation would be spoken in English now. Blizzard closed her eyes and she began to chant again

" *Swirling liquid, icy and cold, hear my words so proud and bold.*

Bring me a warrior, proud and strong. Bring me a warrior that'll right

all that's wrong.

A warrior of ice, strong and tall. A warrior of power, a warrior that won't fall

I ask for thee to bring me thy beast. Bring me the Ice Golem and on all evil he shall feast!

My dear Ice Golem, hear my pleas! Rise from the cauldron and make thy enemies FREEZE!"

As she bellowed the final word, she threw her arms up in the air and a huge beam of energy exploded upwards from the cauldron as if escaping from its depths and climbing up into the atmosphere of the world outside and climbing as high as it dared. The beam then vanished and in its place was a huge white snowball that looked just like your average snowball. But it was no ordinary snowball, this was the birth stage of the Ice Golem. The snowball was bigger than Blizzard herself and it levitated over to her. Blizzard touched the snowball and then stood back as her witchy magic made the snowball shudder. It was almost like it was going to explode it shuddered so much. But the snowball stopped shuddering after a minute and then it began to open up. Limbs unfolded from the spherical object that hung in the air above Blizzard, the limbs growing as they unfolded and becoming arms, hands, legs and feet. A head protruded from the snowball and began to take shape. A shell of icicles began to spread down its back like growing grass, forming a very tough shield for anyone who tried to attack it from behind. The Ice Golem finished taking shape and it roared into life, standing on its own two feet and bellowing a thunderous roar from deep in its throat. The Ice Golem truly looked formidable. It was an enormous twelve feet in height, easily towering over Blizzard herself. It had four horns perched above a pair of illuminated eyes that glowed icy blue, the very glow making the eyes look as cold as the snow and ice of White Acropolis. Around its neck protruded huge icicles that made it look a little like it was wearing a necklace of ice. This was not mere jewellery; it was part of the monster's gargantuan size, bulk and build. Its head had two head protruding from the top and its cheeks were curved. Its shoulders were spiked and the lower arms had shards of ice around them. Its hands had three large fingers. Its legs were a little small compared to the massive body it

had and its feet had three clawed toes. A shell of ice protruded like a tortoise's shell from its back. Its mouth opened wide and had an unusual shape to it, making it look like a true nightmare from a frozen hell below. The Ice Golem was one truly monstrous creature. One could easily see why Ice Mobians often made them up to be guards and protectors for them. Blizzard cackled ecstatically, delighted at the sight of her precious Ice Golem. How wonderful and beautiful it looked to her. She couldn't wait to send it to New Mobotropolis and have the Royal Fighters killed.

"YES! My Ice Golem has been created!" cheered Blizzard "Now getting rid of those Royal Fighters will be infinitely less onerous! Once they're all gone, the Kingdom of Ice can formulate and the Kingdom of Acorn and all its corrupted, scornful existence will be gone forever."

Blizzard then climbed up onto the Ice Golem's back and she climbed up all the way to its neck. Balancing on the icicles around its neck, Blizzard spoke to the Ice Golem.

"Your target my beautiful monster is New Mobotropolis!" she barked at it "You are to destroy the Royal Fighters and then tear down Castle Acorn! When that's done, we shall make a new kingdom, THE KINGDOM OF ICE!"

The Ice Golem nodded understandably and it bent down onto all fours. It began scampering, quite heavily, out of the ice caves that Blizzard took refuge in. The Ice Golem knew where it was going thanks to Blizzard's mind being linked to its own. Ice Golems were mindless, following only the thoughts of their creators. Only Blizzard could control the Ice Golem and all it took was her own thoughts. Blizzard was thinking about New Mobotropolis and the Ice Golem, following her thoughts, headed off towards the city. Once it arrived, the city would be in great danger. Danger that even the Royal Fighters would have trouble taking down…

Back in Castle Acorn, Sally Acorn was still trapped in the dungeons and still crying into her hands. She was very frightened right now and for so many reasons. She was locked in her own dungeon by

Blizzard and had no way of escaping it. Her new arm-blade weapons had been confiscated and she didn't have her staff spare on her, not that it would do much good anyway. There was the fright of perishing in the dungeon and even if she didn't, Blizzard's Ice Golem would likely bulldoze the castle to the ground and then finish her off itself. She was also frightened on what Blizzard's Ice Golem would do and would the Royal Fighters be able to stop it? As Sally cried to herself, she couldn't help but bring up the horrible revelation on the fact her father was a murder, committing a mass murder over a silly bit of conclusion that Blizzard even said was just conclusion and not a fact. Sally took her head out of her hands and she wrapped her arms around her legs.

"Oh daddy, how could you do something so horrible?!" she wailed "Thanks to you, Blizzard wants to take over the kingdom and I'm paying for your crimes! How could you do this? How, HOW?! I thought you were a great man and I was proud to be your daughter. Now…I'm disgusted I'm related to you! Maybe you got what you deserved when Marik killed you*…"

She then smacked herself for saying something so horrible.

"No Sally, that's just horrible of you to say." she scolded "Dad didn't deserve that at all. He does however deserve a severe lecture from me. Pity he's dead so I can never confront him about this heinous crime of his…"

She then rested her forehead against her knees, which were tightly pressed up against her chest.

"Well if I ever get out of here, I'll take it upon myself to fix the Acorn name." she declared "I'll have daddy's journal burnt so that the scorn of the past will be forgotten and erased and I'll improve my family's name. I'll see to it that this revelation never gets spoken of and that nobody other than me knows about it. Pity Blizzard knows, she'll spill the beans and then the populace will hate me and my kingdom forever. But if I destroy the journal, Blizzard won't be able to prove herself correct and the populace will be unlikely to believe her on what she says. So maybe I am safe after all. But…Blizzard will destroy my Royal Fighters, me included, and then erect a new kingdom in place of this one. And all because a member of the

council drove her to murder and my dad had her cult heartlessly executed over a stupid conclusion! Oh dad…you've destroyed us all!"

She found herself wailing again, her tears streaming down her cheeks and onto her knees as she wept into them. She wasn't crying for long though for she could heard a familiar voice calling for her further down the corridor. Sally jumped onto her feet and she pressed her head against the barred window that was in the door and offered the only bit of light into the dungeon.

"Sally? Sally! Where are you?" asked the voice of none other than Sally's best friend and beautiful lady-in-waiting, Nicole the Lynx "Tails and Ruben are wondering if you've got a plan to capture Blizzard yet! Sally?"

How fortuitous! Nicole was coming down the corridors and was looking for her! Sally felt like a right idiot for daring to give up hope of getting out of this dungeon. Of course Nicole would come looking for her if she thought she had been gone for too long! Well it was just lucky that Nicole came sooner, Sally was already getting scared of being locked in here. Sally stuck her arm through the barred window and she waved.

"Nicole! Nicole! I'm in here!" she called out.

Nicole heard Sally instantly and she ran over to the dungeon, confused at the ice that was freezing it shut around the edges. She quickly deduced that Blizzard had done this since nobody in New Mobotropolis had ice powers. Nicole pressed her hands against the door and she stared through the window to see Sally on the other side of the door. Nicole looked gobsmacked to say the least.

"Sally?! What the hell are you doing in there?!" shrieked Nicole "Did Blizzard do this?!" she added, taking note of the ice around the edges.

"Yes, yes! Blizzard did this!" exclaimed Sally, her hands on the bars and her face pressed against them "Now please, let me out of here!"

"Sure no problem!" said Nicole quickly "But wait, what about your

new arm blades? Surely you can use them to just cut through the door."

"Blizzard took them away from me before she locked me up!" explained Sally "They're in the library! Please hurry and get them for me so I can get out of here!"

"Sure, I'll be right back!" blustered Nicole, dashing off down the corridor without a second thought, leaving Sally for the moment as she went to get her blades.

It didn't take her long to find the library since Nicole knew this place like the back of her hand. Walking around Castle Acorn every day made it impossible for Nicole to get lost or end up in the wrong room. The library was three corridor sections away from the dungeon and Nicole was there in half a second. Nicole dashed into the library and saw Sally's metallic wristbands lying on the floor. Blizzard had been pretty stupid to just dump them there, wouldn't it have made more sense to destroy them? Good thing Blizzard didn't do that anyway otherwise Sally would never be getting out of the dungeon. Nicole scooped them up and she rocketed back down to the dungeon where her best friend was imprisoned. Nicole stopped outside the dungeon door, panting for breath and she handed the wristbands through the bars to Sally. Sally took them off her quickly and she clipped them onto her wrists without hesitating. She clenched her fists very tightly, the blades emitting from the wristbands under her arms and hands and Sally plunged the blade in the crack between the door and the wall. She slashed down, breaking the ice that froze the door shut and then she rammed the door with her shoulder. The ice on the other parts of the door broke instantly and the door flung open. Sally was free at last! Sally's first instinct was to throw her arms around Nicole and hug her gratefully.

"Oh thank you, thank you, thank you Nicole!" she cried with relief "I thought I was gonna be stuck in there forever!"

"Anytime my best friend." said Nicole sweetly "Now then, you say Blizzard locked you in there?"

"She did!" gasped Sally "She snuck into the castle using Tails' phase shifter and then she took a bit of my hair and threw me in the

dungeon to rot. She's conducting a new spell, something about an "Ice Golem" and she needed a bit of my hair for it!"

"And she got it…that means…she can conduct her new spell!" gasped Nicole in horror "Oh no! She might have conducted it by now! We'll be too late to stop it!"

"I know! We have to warn everybody and fast!" cried Sally "We need to put the Royal Fighters on high alert pronto!"

"I'll raise the shields!" declared Nicole.

"That won't do any good, Blizzard still has the phase shifter. She'll just phase herself and the Golem through the shields." muttered Sally sadly "We'll have to prepare for their arrival. Before that though, how's Sora doing now?"

"The poor dear's still alive thanks to Tails and Ruben providing her with warm water that'll delay the effects of the Cold Death." said Nicole "Alas, she's still shivering like a leaf though and if we don't get Blizzard to cure Sora, she'll be stuck that way forever." Tails had told her that before Nicole started looking for Sally.

"I know." said Sally "We'll have to defeat this Ice Golem and force Blizzard to cure Sora or she'll never be the same again. She might even give up hope of getting better and might just want to stop living already…"

"I've had the same horrible thought." said Nicole sadly "We need to capture Blizzard and make her comply or Sora won't make it."

"Indeed." said Sally "Let's get the Royal Fighters together and prepare for the Ice Golem's arrival."

Sally and Nicole both ran off down the corridor and headed off to Royal HQ to warn the Royal Fighters of the coming danger. It wouldn't do much good though since the Ice Golem was coming and it would destroy them all once it arrived…

Meanwhile in Royal HQ, Ruben the Water Panther arrived in the

living room with Sora's second bowl of warm water, the only thing that was even keeping her alive at this moment. Tails the Fox wasn't with Ruben and Sora, he had gone into the lab to make something that would hopefully make Blizzard easier to capture. Also, he knew that Ruben seemed to like Sora so he thought it would be nice to leave him and Sora alone and maybe bond together a bit. That would be more than enough to make Sora better despite what she was going through right now. Sora still lay back on the bed, shivering as if someone had turned the thermostat down to minus 10 degrees Celsius as Ruben came into give her the water. Sora took the bowl in her own shaking hands and she gulped it down greedily as if she hadn't had anything to drink for days. Of course, her life was depending on it until she got cured so that would account for drinking it quickly. Sora finished the bowl and she handed it back to Ruben. Ruben put the bowl down and stared sadly at Sora. He was just glad that the water slowed her shivering down momentarily before it acted up again. It really pained him to see his secret crush, an amazing spy and a great Royal Fighter, reduced to a freezing death that was being delayed by a mere bowl of warm water. The more Sora suffered in this horrible state, the more Ruben longed for her to be cured. He wished that Blizzard was right here right now so they could make her cure Sora and end her suffering already. Sora seemed to read his thoughts.

"It's a-a-amazing isn't it?" muttered Sora "I-I-I w-was t-trained to be a g-great spy and th-this is w-w-what I g-get reduced to, s-s-stuck on the s-sofa f-f-freezing t-to death and r-r-relying on b-bowls of w-water to k-keep me alive. And t-t-to think I s-survived m-much worse before…"

"I'll bet you did." said Ruben sadly "I remember how you braved the Region of Rebellious Reptiles and made it out alive."

"Y-yeah." said Sora, thinking back to the day she had single-handedly helped the Royal Fighters defeat the Region of Rebellious Reptiles before they could wreck the Annual Acorn Awards last year "I s-s-survive them and yet th-this is what I e-e-end up as, h-hit b-by a curse and p-pretty much on l-life support now. L-life sure has a strange w-w-way of o-operating d-doesn't it?"

"It's amazing when you can survive the really lethal things and yet

something not so lethal ends up finishing you off." sighed Ruben "But it won't happen to you. Your brother already promised that you'll be saved and Tails is never one to break a promise. You will be saved Sora, I know you will."

"I kn-know." stammered Sora "I j-j-just w-wish that I w-w-would b-be s-saved now. I c-can't stand this sh-shivering anymore!"

"Please Sora, hold on for us. You can do it." said Ruben, taking Sora's freezing cold hand and stroking in softly "Hold on for us and we'll get Blizzard here so she can cure you."

"I w-will but I'm q-q-quickly g-growing tired of this t-torture." whined Sora "I j-just w-want it to s-stop already."

"And we will." Ruben swore "I swear that we will Sora. Just think about getting cured, it'll make it less torturous for you to suffer like this."

"OK R-Ruben…I'll t-try." said Sora weakly.

"That's more like it." said Ruben with a smile "By the way Sora, there's also something I…I kinda…wanna tell you."

Given that Sora was on death's door and need some comfort, Ruben decided to try and confess his love for her. That would make Sora feel much better.

"Oh r-really? Wh-what's that th-then?" asked Sora.

"Well uh…I just want to say that…" Ruben thought hard to keep the blush off his face as he tried to pick the right words to say "That… you're a very good friend of mine and I care for you…very much. That's why I'm so desperate to save you, you mean a lot to me and…I couldn't bear to lose a good friend of mine."

"Ruben…h-has anyone ever t-t-told you h-h-how sweet y-you are?" asked a very flattered and very touched Sora "Y-y-you're j-just so adorable wh-when you s-say cute th-things l-like that."

"Aw…thank you." said Ruben, blushing bright pink "B-b-but that's n-not all I wanted to say." he stammered, trying not to trip over his

words as he spoke.

"Oh…w-what e-else do you w-wanna say then?" asked Sora.

Ruben closed his hands around Sora's hand and he held it tightly to his face. He stared in Sora's beautiful green eyes as he fought himself to say those single three words he'd been dying to say to the super spy since the day she'd first hit on him**

"Sora Prower…I uh…I…" Ruben found himself trailing off but he fought to keep on track "I…I just wanna say that…you've been such a good friend to me, even offering to teach me how to climb…that I…I have grown…grown to…to…"

"To…what?" asked Sora curiously.

Go on Ruben, say those words! Ruben screamed in his head. It seemed to work for Ruben finally had the courage to say it.

"Sora…I l…"

Before he could finish what he was saying, the door flung open, making Ruben jump into the air like a scared kitten and he turned around to see Sally and Nicole standing in the doorway looking very frantic as if the end of the world was coming. Ruben silently cursed in his head, annoyed that he had been interrupted just before he could confess he loved Sora. Did fate have a grudge on him or something?! But Ruben read the faces of Sally and Nicole and instantly deduced that something was terribly wrong, meaning he had been interrupted for something urgent.

"Why your majesty, whatever is the matter?" asked Ruben.

"We need you along with the other Royal Fighters on the double!" cried Sally "Blizzard's coming and she's making an Ice Golem to try and destroy us all! We need to be ready for its arrival!"

At this moment, Ruben wanted to kiss fate directly on the lips. Blizzard was coming! YES! Now Sora could be saved! That is…if the Royal Fighters could stop her that is. But the trouble was, Ruben didn't want to leave Sora unattended so he remained where he was. He couldn't risk leaving Sora alone for longer than fifteen minutes,

she could easily succumb to the Cold Death and be dead before they could get Blizzard to cure her.

"You all can go without me." said Ruben "I'm staying her to look after Sora. If we take too long to defeat Blizzard, she'll die. I need to make sure she gets her next bowl of warm water on time."

"OK then Ruben, that's reasonable enough." said Sally "You make sure Sora lives long enough for us to subdue Blizzard, we'll do the rest."

"B-b-be c-careful out there." said Sora weakly "And p-p-please…b-b-bring Blizzard here. I c-c-can't st-stand this C-Cold D-Death anymore."

"We will succeed Sora dear, don't worry." said Nicole "Besides, we came to Tails a moment ago and he has a device that should hopefully stop Blizzard from using the phase shifter. She won't get away from us that easily. We'll just have to stop her Ice Golem too."

With that said, Sally and Nicole left the room and darted off outside along with Tails to prepare for Blizzard's arrival, which was coming very, VERY shortly. Shortly as in the Ice Golem was running through Green Hill Zone right now. As the two girls left, Sora looked back at Ruben.

"Now th-then…w-w-what w-was it you w-wanted to s-say to m-me?" she asked.

Ruben, for some reason, had now lost the courage to tell Sora he loved her. He found himself blushing immediately and he grew nervous.

"Oh uh…heh, heh…um, before we were interrupted, I was just gonna say that I…like you. Really like you." said Ruben with a nervous giggle, wanting to kick himself for being unable to say what he REALLY wanted to say.

"Th-that's v-very nice of y-you t-to say." said Sora sweetly "I'm s-so g-glad t-to have a f-friend like you."

Ruben just smiled at the shivering Sora and he decided to hug her in

the vain hope it would warm her up and make her feel better. He and Sora gave each other a friendly hug, Ruben trying not to shiver as his body embraced Sora's freezing cold body. He could almost imagine how horrible it must feel for Sora to be going through this, being unable to feel warm and feeling cold even to the touch. He longed for when this would be over. And yet, as he hugged Sora, one thought circled his mind.

Why can't I tell Sora that I love her? his thoughts whined repeatedly…

Outside, the Royal Fighters had all gathered around in a line and were on the outskirts of the city, waiting for the Ice Golem to come over the ring wall and begin its attack. Sally already had her blades activated, Nicole had her broadsword at the ready, Bunnie Rabbot and Geoffrey St. John had their weapons ready and Amy, Cream and Cosmo had their weapons ready too. Tails had a new invention on himself. It was the aforementioned device that would stop Blizzard using the phase shifter. It was a bazooka shaped device with four prongs on the end and it fired EMP shots. It was meant entirely for short-circuiting machinery. Tails would aim it at Blizzard and the shot would home in onto the phase shifter like a heat-seeker missile and then it would short circuit the device, rendering it useless to Blizzard and indeed anyone else for that matter. Tails just hoped that it worked. He'd soon be able to test it though for the Ice Golem finally arrived, ploughing its way through the trees and thundering on all fours across the surrounding field of grass that stretched all around the city in all directions. The Royal Fighters could feel the ground shaking as it came closer and closer to the city. They hadn't been expecting it to be incredibly large but the shaking of the ground told them they were in for a large sized opponent. The Ice Golem finally reached New Mobotropolis and it leaped up into the air like a giant frog springing from a lily pad over the wall and it landed with a heavy thud that made the Royal Fighters nearly fall over. The Ice Golem bellowed a thunderous roar that seemed to make everything shudder all around, even the buildings. The Royal Fighters all took a step back, perplexed by the size and build of the monstrous creature they were met with.

"Look at the size of that ugly critter!" gasped Bunnie.

"It's pretty big luv but we've taken down much bigger before." said Geoffrey "We'll stop this blighter!"

"I sincerely hope we can." said a very frightened Cosmo, shaking like a leaf (if you'll excuse the pun) at the sight of the beast.

"Blizzard! You trespass on Acorn property!" yelled Sally "You can leave right this minute or you can face justice for all your crimes against us!"

"Says the one who's father murdered my entire cult in cold blood!" snarled Blizzard, standing on the Ice Golem's shoulder and pointing sharply at Sally with a furious expression on her face. "You have no right to call ME out for MY crimes when your family is not exactly clean either!"

The Royal Fighters all stared at Sally in disbelief. True Blizzard could easily be lying about that but still, it did seem sudden for Blizzard to suddenly start pointing fingers at the deceased King Max.

"Your father did…what?!" gasped Nicole, her face the embodiment of horror.

"Don't listen to her, she's just trying to justify her actions." lied Sally "What she's just said, it's not true."

"Of course it isn't! Blizzard's just a lying scumbag!" growled Amy "She'll say anything to make herself feel better! She's going down for daring to lie about the former king like this!"

Blizzard just sighed in annoyance.

"Why must you heroes be so blind to the truth?" she muttered "No matter, I shall destroy all of you and I have the perfect weapon for that, my glorious Ice Golem! These creatures made the perfect guards for many an Ice Mobian and now they'll destroy you all! Once you're all dead, you can never interfere with my plans again and this corrupted kingdom will be replaced with my own. And it serves you right for all the suffering you've given me over the years!"

"Story of my life." muttered Amy "Now get down here so I can crush your head like a rock!"

"No, I'm staying up here thank you very much." said Blizzard coldly "And since I'm upon my Ice Golem and I have the phase shifter on, you will not be able to touch it." she crowed, proudly displaying the switched on phase shifter that was clipped around her wrist.

"Let's see you be so certain when the phase shifter suddenly stops working!" yelled Tails, blasting at Blizzard with his EMP launcher.

No of course, the shot wouldn't effect Blizzard since she was now intangible. But the shot was meant to just short-circuit the phase shifter, not take Blizzard out. The EMP blast homed in on the phase shifter and it struck the device. A powerful electrical surge coursed through the phase shifter, switching it off and preventing it from working anymore. Because it wasn't working anymore, Blizzard was no longer intangible and thus, the EMP shock ended up effecting her too! Blizzard screamed a bloodcurdling scream as the EMP shock spread up her arm and took effect of her body. The shock knocked Blizzard clean out and she fell directly from atop the Ice Golem's shoulder. She came down with a thump on the ground but being an Ice Witch, the fall didn't harm her (magical beings are more resistant to falls then ordinary people). Blizzard lay there on the ground, unconscious but alive. What an opportunity this was! Sally sprang into action immediately.

"Geoffrey, tie Blizzard up! Everybody else, fight the Ice Golem!" she ordered.

The Royal Fighters obeyed their orders. Geoffrey ran over to Blizzard and he loaded his dart launcher with just the thing to restrain her, a rope dart. This dart would explode just above the captives and ensnare them with ropes. It was the perfect restraint tool. The Ice Golem could see that its master was in danger and it put a hand in front of Blizzard to stop Geoffrey from what he was planning on doing. Sally just darted in and slashed it across the hand with her arm blades. The Ice Golem bellowed in pain and it clutched its hand. Now Geoffrey could do his task. He fired the dart at Blizzard and the dart exploded, throwing ropes all around Blizzard that immediately tied themselves around her. They wrapped her up

from her chest to her ankles. There was no escape for Blizzard one she woke up. Pleased with his handiwork, Geoffrey propped Blizzard up against the wall of a house and left her there to join in the battle. The Ice Golem bore over the Royal Fighters and it opened its enormous mouth. Out of its mouth came a show of sharp icicles that would tear the Royal Fighters to pieces once they hit. The Royal Fighters all dodged the icicles, Bunnie using her shield generator to defend herself from the shards while the rest ran around, and Sally slashed at the Ice Golem's ankles. Her blades could cut through anything but the unfortunate thing about a being made of snow and ice is that it could regenerate itself. Every slice Sally made was rendered moot by the Ice Golem replacing the cut with new snow that formed its body. It was a pity that the heat of the day couldn't melt the creature since anything Ice Mobian related is immune to sunlight and heat, that would have made things much easier. If the Royal Fighters had a flamethrower or something, that would have been useful too. As is, they just had to hit it with what they had and hope to find a weak spot. Only…there didn't seem to be a weak spot on the creature at all. That was what worried Sally. Regardless, she'd find a weak spot eventually and she would bring down the behemoth once and for all. The Ice Golem glared at Sally with its icy cold eyes and it kicked her away, sending Sally hurling through the air like a football. Bunnie saw this and she flew up into the air to catch Sally. She caught her and she lowered her down to the ground. Sally smiled gratefully at Bunnie and then instantly ran back into the battle. Bunnie deployed her arm cannon and she blasted at the Ice Golem. The blow took off one of its arms but as we all know, the Ice Golem has regenerative powers. Losing an arm was nothing for the creature, it just grew another one in its place like a starfish that's lost a limb. The lost arm just melted away into a puddle after its new one grew. Bunnie gasped. How could they destroy a creature that grows new limbs when it loses one?! The Ice Golem swatted at Bunnie but the Rabbot flew out of the way and she aimed the rockets of her feet at the Ice Golem's hand. The Ice Golem screeched in pain as the searing hot fumes from Bunnie's robotical feet scalded it. Fire was the only weakness the Ice Golem had and pityingly enough, the Royal Fighters didn't have any fire powers or flamethrowers. Bunnie's jets wouldn't be enough to melt it, the Ice Golem was just too big and it could take Bunnie down before she was even half done. Not to mention prolonged use of her

cybernetics could make Bunnie feel worn out so she'd be exhausted and probably collapse before her jets made any real effort. They had to find another weakness and they had to find it fast. The Ice Golem glowered at Bunnie and it fired some icicles out of its mouth again. Bunnie dodged all the icicles but one managed to skim her across her organic arm, making her yelp in pain. That was enough for the Ice Golem to punch Bunnie down onto the ground to which Geoffrey was on hand to catch his falling girlfriend. He caught her and the two ended up sprawling on the ground.

"You OK luv?" asked Geoffrey.

"Ah'm fine sugah, just a little scratch that's all." muttered Bunnie "That thing's pretty tough and unfortunately, its weakness is fire and we haven't got any darn fire powers or fire weapons we can use on it."

"That's a bummer." said Geoffrey "We'll have to think of something else. And I have just the idea…"

The skunk eyed the still unconscious Blizzard lying nearby. He could probably force her to stop the Ice Golem. Yes…it was a good idea and it was going to work perfectly. Geoffrey sprinted over to Blizzard but the Ice Golem fired shards of ice at him to make him back off. Ice Golems were created to be guardians and that was just what it was doing, defending Blizzard from harm. Cream and Cosmo threw their bladed discs into the golem's eyes to distract it. The discs hit it and the Ice Golem cried out a thunderous bellow of pain. The eyes were a sensitive spot on the creature as is the case with any creature that has eyes. The Ice Golem glowered at Cosmo and Cream and it lunged at the two with its enormous hands. They both dove for cover instantly but the Ice Golem's hands slammed into the ground and made it shudder. This brought the Royal Fighters down onto their knees but they weren't down for long. Amy ran in and walloped the Ice Golem's hand with her hammer. The impact left an imprint on its hand but the golem fixed that easily and it swatted at Amy. Sally was on hand to save Amy by slicing off its hand but that didn't do anything except make the creature pause to grow a new one. Amy ran in and hammered the Ice Golem in the knee. The hammer didn't really harm it though and the Ice Golem just kicked Amy away. Cream flew in and saved Amy just before she could

crash into something. As Cream caught Amy, Bunnie and Nicole ran in together to attack the Ice Golem. Geoffrey watched the Ice Golem and he could see it was distracted. Good, that meant Blizzard was all his. He ran over to Blizzard and he removed her belt so she wouldn't try to freeze the ropes and break out. He knew that the gem on Blizzard's belt is what gave her freezing abilities, Amy had told all the members of the team so Geoffrey knew removing the belt was important. Now that was done, he smacked her in the face, not feeling bad about doing so at all.

"Oy! Wake up you little witch!" growled Geoffrey.

The smack seemed to have been enough for Blizzard woke up. As she woke up, she quickly realized that she had been tied up and she struggled in her ropes.

"Grrr…blasted Royal Fighter! Release me at once!" snarled Blizzard.

"No chance you scum-bag." said Geoffrey coldly "I want you to tell me how to stop yer Ice Golem. If you refuse, I'll shoot you through the head."

"You wouldn't!" snarled Blizzard "You heroes couldn't kill if your lives depended on it!"

"Oh really? Care to test that theory missy?" sneered Geoffrey, pointing his crossbow at Blizzard's head and preparing to fire it.

Blizzard grew nervous. Geoffrey was being serious! If she didn't tell him how to stop the Ice Golem, he would kill her! Blizzard couldn't get revenge on the Kingdom of Acorn if she was dead and she had no way of escaping this. The ropes were too tough for her, she had no spells that could help her, the phase shifter wasn't working anymore thanks to Tails and freezing the ropes wouldn't help since her belt was gone. Reluctantly, Blizzard did as she was told.

"The only way to stop an Ice Golem is to go straight for the heart." explained Blizzard "When an Ice Golem is created, a chunk of ice that acts as its heart is formed in its chest. Remove the chunk of ice and the creature will die and melt away into nothing. It's a failsafe that allows Ice Mobians to stop one dead in its tracks should they

lose control of it or it turns on us."

"Thank you very much Blizzard." said Geoffrey with a smile on his face, pleased to hear all this.

He called over to Sally, not daring to leave Blizzard alone even for a minute.

"Hey Sally! I got Blizzard to tell us how to stop that thing!" he cried "Go straight for the heart! It's the only way to stop it!"

"Got it!" Sally called back "Royal Fighters, open up its chest so I can finish it off!" she called to the others.

The Royal Fighters got the message and they all sprang into action. The Ice Golem swiped at them with its enormous arms but the heroes all dodged the blows and ran towards it. Geoffrey took aim while making sure Blizzard didn't attempt anything and he fired some exploding darts into the Ice Golem's chest. He fired ten and made a circle with them around the Ice Golem's chest. He then set them all off to blow, the darts all exploding in unison and blowing chunks of snow off the golem. The Ice Golem collapsed onto its back, clutching its chest in pain. This gave the Royal Fighters a chance to attack it while it was down. Geoffrey's darts had blown a hole in the Ice Golem's chest and the Royal Fighters had to keep it open before it could regenerate itself. Bunnie blasted at the Ice Golem's chest to keep the hole open and Sally and Nicole cleaved away at it with their swords. Tails, Cream and Cosmo just dug away at it as if they were digging through a snow pile. All this pain was preventing the Ice Golem from getting back up and regenerating itself. The Royal Fighters kept at it until they all spotted something inside its chest. It was a chunk of ice shaped like a human heart. It was just a chunk of ice though, nothing organic about it at all.

"There's a chunk of ice in its chest!" Sally called to Geoffrey "Should we remove it?"

"Yes!" Geoffrey called back "That's how to stop it!"

Sally didn't wait to be asked twice. She grabbed the ice chunk and pulled it out of the Ice Golem's chest. It made her cringe to think that

she, in a way, just ripped its heart out like some Aztec Priest who had a sacrificing to the gods craze but she was all too happy to have finished it off now. The Ice Golem's eyes went dead and it lay there on the ground, dead and finished and now melting away in the hot sun of the afternoon. The Ice Golem melted away into an enormous puddle, the Royal Fighters just watching it melt and letting the water trickle around their feet. Now the Ice Golem was finished, there was just one more thing to do. The Royal Fighters all walked over to Blizzard and Sally pointed her blades at her.

"Blizzard, you are under arrest for your crimes against the Royal Fighters." said Sally coldly "But before you go to prison, you can do us one big favour."

"Why should I?" demanded Blizzard furiously.

"Because we will be forced to use less civil methods if you don't comply." snarled Sally "We mean it."

Blizzard already knew that Sally was being serious. Geoffrey had threatened to kill her just to make her tell him how to stop the Ice Golem. She couldn't take her chances here, she had to comply or else.

"Alright then, what do you want me to do?" asked Blizzard.

Tails stormed up to Blizzard and he grabbed her by the collar of her robes.

"Cure my sister!" he demanded "Vanquish the Cold Death and save Sora or I might have to build something that'll inflict great pain on you!"

Blizzard scowled. This was the worst day of her life. Her Ice Golem had been vanquished and now she had to reluctantly save the life of a worthless citizen. Could this get any worse…?

In a matter of minutes, Blizzard had been hoisted over to Royal HQ and now she was standing before the sofa-bound Sora, who was still shivering like there was no tomorrow, and Ruben stood beside

Sora, ready to defend her if Blizzard dared to do something horrible to her. Blizzard had been released of her ropes so that she could use her hands but her the rope had been tied again around her wrists and ankles to prevent her from trying anything or trying to run away. Her belt was still removed so she couldn't freeze the ropes and break them. In fact, Sally had sliced the belt in half so Blizzard would never freeze anybody ever again. That alone made Blizzard furious. She stood still with Sally's blade against her back. The Ice Witch had no choice but to obey her orders.

"Cure Sora." ordered Sally "And don't you dare add in any side effects or sneak a curse onto her. You are to cure Sora of the Cold Death, nothing more. Try anything funny and I'll be forced to end you."

"Whatever." sighed Blizzard "You're no better then your murderous father. It would make perfect sense for you to kill me now and finish what your father started."

"Just do it!" snapped Sally.

Blizzard sighed and then she held her hands over Sora's body. She closed her eyes and began to chant away.

"Power of snow, power of ice. I call you for a deed, a deed so nice. Lift thy curse, I say with each breath. Save this poor soul from the Cold Death."

She repeated the chant three times and then suddenly, Sora's entire body appeared to glow a bright, icy blue colour as if someone had switched a light on inside of her. Sora's mouth opened up and out of her mouth came a beam of light that surely resembled the Cold Death. The beam formed a sphere in Blizzard's hands and Blizzard held the sphere until eventually, it disappeared into nothing. When the Cold Death was removed, it was immediately erased from existence. Blizzard lowered her arms, her face a hideous scowl over the fact she had been forced to do this. Never again did she want to save the life of her enemies. As for Sora, she lay still on the bed for a minute until she finally sat up and pushed the blankets off of herself, taking a big stretch.

"Boy is it warm under those blankets." she said with a yawn "I don't know why I'm lying under them. I'm gonna melt under them…"

She stopped for a moment and felt herself all over.

"Wait…I feel warm? I'm not shivering? My voice isn't wobbly?" she said as if she was physically surprised by all of this. She had been shivering and freezing for so long it seemed physically shocking that she'd finally stopped. She soon worked it out though.

"I'm cured!" she cheered excitedly "The Cold Death's gone! I'm not gonna die after all!"

"YES!" cheered both Tails and Ruben at once.

They both instantly hugged Sora and began to cry happily for her, joyful over the fact she was going to live after all.

"Oh Sora, it's so good to have you better again!" cried Tails.

"Especially since you're not cold anymore!" cried Ruben, his happiness over this easily over-shadowing Tails'.

"Aw thank you boys." said Sora graciously "And thank you both for taking good care of me while I was suffering. I wouldn't have held on if it weren't for you two."

"You're welcome Sora!" said Tails and Ruben in unison.

The Royal Fighters all gathered around Sora to express how happy they were that she was better again and that she wasn't going to die. Big mistake though for Blizzard ended up getting shuffled to the back as they pushed her aside. Given she was tied up, the Royal Fighters didn't think she would try to escape or anything but Blizzard was going to now their attention was diverted. Now Blizzard was behind them, she reached into her robe pocket and pulled out…a smoke bomb! Blizzard had kept one on her as a contingency plan. She knew that it was useless to rely on technology since technology can break so she had taken a smoke bomb with her in case the phase shifter broke or something and she needed another way of escaping. Being held at blade point hadn't given her an opportunity to do so but now the Royal Fighters had ignored her in favour of

Sora, she had the perfect chance. Blizzard smirked at the Royal Fighters and she rose her arm in the air.

"Ala…KAZAM!"

She threw the bomb down and it exploded into a billow of purple gas that surrounded her. The Royal Fighters turned around and just caught a glimpse of Blizzard disappearing into a mist of purple smoke. The smoke vanished into nothing, leaving no trace of Blizzard behind. That instantly made Amy go insane with anger.

GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR…THE BITCH GOT AWAY AGAIN! she screamed, yanking on her hair in anguish "FOR GOD'S SAKE, WHEN WILL SHE STOP EVADING US?!"

"I didn't think she had another smoke bomb on her." said Sally guiltily "I didn't think she'd be able to get away. I'm sorry Amy, I really am."

"It's not your fault Sally, she would have escaped anyway." said Nicole "We throw in her jail, she'd just poof out like she did do. We should have searched her to make sure that she didn't have anything on her."

"Well we all make mistakes." said Sora supportively "And we learn from those mistakes. Now we know next time to make sure Blizzard can't get away when we've got her."

"Indeed Sora." said Sally "Still though, at least we managed to save your life. That alone was worth Blizzard getting away."

"I'll say it was." said Ruben agreeably "Who cares if Blizzard got away as long as my Sora's still alive?"

Sora just giggled at Ruben.

"YOUR Sora? Ha, ha…since when was I YOUR Sora?" she teased, nudging Ruben playfully.

"Oh um…I mean, "as long as Sora's still alive"." said Ruben, blushing nervously and laughing at his little remark.

"Thank you water boy." said Sora, giving Ruben a little kiss on the cheek.

Ruben took the kiss and he beamed happily. That was two kisses he'd gotten from Sora now, looks like he was going to score with her after all. Tails just smiled, happy to see Sora well again and how happy Ruben was right now. He looked forward to when they inevitably confessed the obvious love they have for each other. It was going to be worth seeing that's for sure. As for Sally, there was one thing on her mind right now.

"Now then, all we can do for this moment is wait for Sonic and Wilson to come home." said Sally "I wonder how they're…"

"Hey guys! We're baaaack!" called out a cheerful voice that was all too familiar to the Royal Fighters.

"It's Sonic! He's back!" cheered Tails "Yippee! Let's go see him!"

With that said, the Royal Fighters all charged out of the room eagerly and the moment they reached the door, they were met with a most wonderful sight. Standing outside of Royal HQ was Sonic the Hedgehog himself and with him stood Wilson the Dog, who was carrying Mandy Mouse in his arms after the whole ordeal with The Exterminators, and Team Chaotix. They all looked quite happy to be home, Mandy more so than the others given her time of hell with The Exterminators***and the Royal Fighters exploded with joy upon seeing them.

"Hi everybody! How's things been in my absence?" asked Sonic.

"Sonic! You're back! And you've rescued Mandy and brought her home too!" cried Sally, grasping Sonic into a hug.

"We sure did your majesty." said Sonic "And Mandy's quite eager to see you all again."

"Oh you bet I am!" laughed Mandy "Hey guys! Did anyone miss me while I was gone?"

The Royal Fighters ran around Mandy and began expressing their joy at her return as well as the others. Blizzard may have gotten

away but this happy sight before them was more than enough to make up for it. And things were about to get happier tomorrow for something very romantic was going to happen…something very romantic and happy indeed…

Footnotes:

*** Amazing that *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 21* never ceases to be brought up eh?**

**** It happened in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 150* where Sora saved Ruben from a missile and playfully called him "water-boy"**

*****See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 161-163* for the whole story!**

Well this bitter snowstorm ended up with a sweet ending didn't it? Well that's it for this arc. Blizzard is back for the next one though for she has many more plans and the ones to foil them will be none other than...Silver and Blaze! Those futuristic heroes are back for the next arc so don't miss it!

Meanwhile, make sure to catch the next* Heroes of Mobius *chapter. Sonic and Sally have their first date at last...;)

Impending Crisis Part 1

Arc 22: Impending Crisis

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 163 and 164

Crisis on Infinite Mobiuses Prologue

Part 1: Out in the Cold

Three years ago…

It was just another day for the young Silver the Hedgehog. Another day in this decaying world that he strained to call "home".

Silver was a psychokinetic hedgehog with great powers and a strong sense of justice as well as a determination to right all wrongs, particularly what had gone wrong with Mobius. It was hard to imagine that 197 years ago, something went terribly wrong and wrecked Mobius forever. There had been moments where it seemed the world would get better but then other things happened and just threw it back into relapse, most particularly the great meteor smash that wiped out Soleanna forever. Silver hadn't been born when it happened but he did have to imagine what it must have been like for the poor people hoping that Soleanna would return to its former glory only to have the city destroyed forever. Silver began to wonder if the world would ever recover from the apocalypse that people don't remember the cause of. 197 years had passed and nothing had changed. Mobius may as well just be dead for eternity. Cities had been destroyed, life dwindled and food supplies became scarce. Many people had given up hope of ever seeing Mobius return to its former glory but Silver was determined to find out what wrecked the world and make a better future for Mobius and its inhabitants. He dreamed of an absolution, a better world to live in and a place that he would happily call home. His parents before him had been training him, mentoring him to be the one hedgehog who would save Mobius and fix what had wrecked it and made it such a barren wasteland. Sadly his father had passed away just days after his*

fifteenth birthday from a disease known as N.I.D.S. and his mother died a few years before from a head trauma. Silver had been distraught over his father's death and he was determined to live on in his memory and make him proud. So Silver had been taking up the rest of his training alone. Training for the day he would be allowed to use a Super Warp Ring and be allowed to time travel. Time travellers like his father had a strict code of honour, a Super Warp Ring mustn't be bestowed to the offspring until they're eighteen years old. Silver was not going to dishonour that code and take the warp ring already, he was going to earn the right to use it. Right about now, he was just having a nice flight over the city, something that he found to be quite relaxing on a slow day. Of course, with the world in ruination, every day was slow. Silver had been training much on his flying and only now had he gotten good at it. He was keeping up the practice by having this peaceful flight and he couldn't get enough of being able to fly. It was just amazing to him and he wondered if his parents enjoyed it as much as he was right now. As he flew over the city of Nekronopolis , his home city, he sighed despairingly at the ruins that he had to call his home.

"I bet this city was awesome when it was still grand and alive." muttered Silver as he lowered down and began flying through some ally ways "Bet nobody would have anticipated it would become like this, empty and lifeless with ruins for homes and shelter…"

As he flew through the ally way, he suddenly heard a strange sound. Silver stopped for a minute and he listened out. His hearing was more sensitive than the average Mobian what with him being psychic powered and all. He could hear the sound of someone crying. Whoever it was, they sounded very upset. Silver flew off further down the ally way and he followed the crying sound. He hated hearing people cry and he loved to try and make them feel better. He turned around a corner and came down another ally way that led to a destroyed garage. The sound was getting louder, he must be close by. Silver flew closer to the garage and he pushed aside the broken door that was just sitting in front of the entrance forlornly as if it was tired of standing up and just decided to sag exhaustedly by the entrance. Silver gasped in surprise at what he saw. Sitting in the charred, twisted, wrecked chassis of a hover car was a girl! Not just any girl but a female cat with purple fur and

wearing a purple coat, white gloves, pink high heels and a red band that kept her hair up. Her hair and tail had darker purple tips and there was a red gem in her forehead. She was covering her face with her hands and weeping like a willow into them so Silver couldn't see her face. He did however feel sorry for this stranger. She looked very upset and he wanted to comfort her. Silver approached the stranger.

"Uh…hello there?" he said softly "Are you upset miss? Why are you crying? Can I help you at all?"

The stranger lifted her head up and instantly threw a cloud of flames at Silver. Silver was whisked off his feet by the fire and he landed back outside the garage with a heavy thud on his back.

"Go away!" yelled the stranger "Keep away from me! You don't want to be near a monster like me!"

Silver now pitied the stranger even more. Monster like me? She must be one of those people, those who are picked on for their appearance and abilities. Well Silver knew the feeling. Some people considered him a "freak" for his psychic abilities but he didn't let it bother him since his parents insisted his powers were destined to make him great one day just as their powers had made them great. Silver picked himself up and he went back into the garage. The cat was back to crying into her hands again.

"Look miss, I'm not gonna hurt you." said Silver "Please, I just want to…"

The cat leaped out of the car in a furious, fiery rage and she landed just in front of Silver, making him jump back in alarm. Her hands were alight and now her face was uncovered, Silver could see what she looked like. She had the most beautiful yellow eyes he'd ever seen and her face was very lovely looking, even if it was curled into an enraged snarl.

"I thought I told you to get lost!" screamed the cat "Leave here now or I'll MAKE you leave!"

Silver was surprised to see that he actually recognized this stranger.

"Wait a minute…you're Princess Blaze the Cat!" he cried out "Daughter of Ember the Cat! The Empress of the Fire Cat Kingdom ! It's a pleasure to meet you your highness…"

"DON'T CALL ME YOUR HIGHNESS!" roared the cat, throwing fire at Silver and making him back off hastily "I hate being called your highness! And don't call me "princess" either, I'm no princess! Not anymore that is…"

Silver shivered a little, scared by Blaze's fiery temper and powers, but he didn't let it bother him for long. Silver regained himself and he spoke to Blaze again, keeping his distance this time.

"Oh…I'm sorry, I didn't know that Blaze." said Silver "Please forgive me. So…why do you think you're not a princess anymore?"

Blaze tensed up a little but she put her flames out and she sighed a heavy sigh. Thankfully, she didn't attack Silver again. She just looked sad and she put her arms around herself.

"Didn't you hear? The Kingdom of the Fire Cats is no more." she said sadly "We were wiped out by the Great Flood of Black Acropolis a week ago."

Silver remembered hearing about that in the news that spread around the world whenever something big happened. A tidal wave had suddenly happened and flooded a great area of the planet. It had spread to Black Acropolis, the home of the Fire Cat race and where their kingdom had been established. And now according to Blaze, the flood had wiped them all out. Black Acropolis was still as active and lava filled as ever but that didn't stop the flood unfortunately. It surprised Silver to hear that the Kingdom of the Fire Cats had been wiped out by the flood. But then how did Blaze survive and how was she still here? Shouldn't she be dead too?

"Well if your kingdom was wiped out, how did you survive?" asked Silver?

"Mother forced me to evacuate for my own safety." said Blaze bitterly "I wanted to stay and help her like a good princess should do but she just told me that I was too young to help so she made me

leave her and all my friends behind. Now my whole family and friends are buried under waves of water and will never light another fire again! I'm the last of my kind and there's nobody with the heart to take me in. I'm just left to scrounge on the streets like a street rat and everybody who sees me brands me a "freak" and a "monster" because of my fire powers. Oh I don't know why I'm bothering carrying on with my life now. I have NOTHING left and nobody wants me around! I may as well…as well…just…"

She couldn't hold it in any longer. Blaze broke down in tears again, putting her head in her hands and wailing into them. Silver felt really sorry for Blaze. He had lost all his family too what with his parents having passed away and he had no other relatives around so he was alone pretty much too. Poor Blaze however was not only alone, she was shunned and scorned upon by the populace and treated like a monster. Well he would see to that. Silver approached Blaze cautiously and he put a hand on her shoulder. Blaze looked up at Silver and seemed to scowl at him but she did nothing.

"I'm so sorry to hear that Blaze." said Silver sadly "I know how you feel. Some people think I'm a freak too because of my psychic powers. And I too am alone for I lost my parents and have no other relatives and no real friends. However, I'd be all too happy to take you in Blaze. You'll be quite at home with me and I'll never shut you out. I don't think you're a monster, I think you're just misunderstood because you're different. Well I have powers too so I think you're quite normal in my eyes."

"R-really?" asked Blaze, very flattered to hear this from the stranger that had approached her.

"Sure!" said Silver "So Blaze, what do you say?"

"I say…I accept your offer." said Blaze kindly, her voice much softer suddenly "I think that's a very nice thing you're doing for me."

"Anytime Blaze." said Silver "After all, someone of your heritage deserves to be treated well and treating you well is what I'm going to do."

"Thank you." said Blaze, hugging Silver gratefully "But please don't

treat me like royalty, I'm not a royal anymore. There's nothing to be a ruler of so why keep my royal heritage? Just treat me like a normal person."

"Very well Blaze, I'll do just that." said Silver, hugging Blaze back "It's very nice to meet you I must say."

"It's very nice to meet you too um…" Blaze paused for a minute for she didn't know the stranger's name.

"Silver, Silver the Hedgehog." said Silver.

"Wait a minute…Silver as in "The son of the great time traveller Psycho the Hedgehog"?" Blaze blurted surprisingly "Wow! It's an honour to meet the son of a great time traveller!" she said, bowing before Silver as if she was addressing the king of the castle.

"Please Blaze, don't give me the fanfare, I'm just "Silver the Hedgehog"." said Silver bashfully "You want to just be Blaze the Cat, I just want to be Silver the Hedgehog."

"OK then." said Blaze with a smile "I will say though, I think me and you are going to be great friends I do."

"I think so too Blaze." said Silver, smiling back at the beautiful pyrokinetic cat.

He and Blaze took each other's hands and they walked off out of the garage where Silver prepared to fly off and take Blaze to his home…

Present Day…

Dawn shone over Mobius once again and the bright orange light of the sun seeped through the window and over Blaze's face, waking her up from a deep sleep and disrupting a wonderful dream she had been having. She had been dreaming about the day she and Silver had first met each other again, her favourite dream of all time for it reminded her how much better her life had become since the day they had met. Before meeting Silver, Blaze had become very close to giving up on life as a whole but then Silver offered to take her in

and now she was living a peaceful life with him and enjoying every moment of it. Silver had made her life worth living again after the grievous loss of her kingdom three years ago and as she spent more time with Silver, she found herself growing more and more infatuated with him. She was seeing Silver as more than a friend, she was seeing him as her soul mate in a way. She was growing to love Silver although she wasn't entirely sure if it was love she felt for him or not. She hadn't been too good with emotions in her life but she did know that her friendship with Silver was more than mere friendship. Blaze sat up in her bed and she stretched and gave out a loud yawn.

"Oooooh..." she murmured sleepily, smacking her lips and rubbing her eyes "I love having that dream. Takes me back to a wonderful day in my life that I will forever cherish."

She climbed out of bed and got changed from her night dress into her usual attire. As she slipped on her coat, tights, shoes and gloves, she held her hair up and slipped the hairband around it to keep it there (at night, Blaze sleeps with her hair down). She looked over into a rather grimy but intact mirror to see how she looked. She looked quite neat and tidy, just how she liked to look. Blaze smiled a small smile to herself and then she wandered over to the window of her home. When she wasn't guarding the Sol Emeralds, she just lived in a cosy room in a wrecked hotel that Silver also lived in. They lived next door to each other so they remained quite close to each other when Blaze wasn't at work. Blaze's room wasn't as wrecked as most other rooms in the hotel and Silver had picked this one for her since he thought she (literally) deserved the best room in the house or so it's said. The hotel had a good view of the dystopian city that was their home although both of them would have preferred a real home rather than wrecked buildings and ruination. Until they fixed the past though, that wasn't going to happen any time soon. Seeing the past had made Silver and Blaze more determined then ever to save Mobius from this apocalyptic future it was living in but annoyingly enough, they still hadn't found any clues as to what caused this disaster and how they could stop it. So as much as they hated it, they had to keep living in this dead world until further notice. Blaze sighed as her eyes swept over the scenery outside the hotel.

"To think this looks so beautiful 200 years ago..." sighed Blaze "Oh what could have caused such a beautiful world to become this? I really hope we finally find out the cause of this disaster and prevent it. I do have to wonder...what will mine and Silver's lives be like in a perfect world? Would we have met? Maybe so, maybe not. Oh well, it's still worth thinking about what life in a good world full of life will be like..."

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of somebody knocking on her door. Blaze didn't even need to answer it, she knew who was there.

"Come in." she said politely.

The door opened up and in walked Silver. He looked quite bright and cheery this morning and he had his hands behind his back for some reason. It wasn't like Silver to hide something, especially from Blaze although he had his reasons for it. Blaze smiled at the sight of her friend. Just seeing Silver was enough to make her morning any day.

"Good morning Silver." she said "Did you sleep well last night?"

"Like a log." said Silver "We had a silent night for a change. It's always nice when the weather calms down for once."

"Agreed." said Blaze, eyeing Silver's obscured arms "What's that behind your back?" she asked, pointing at him.

"Just a little something for you precious." said Silver with a cheeky grin on his face.

He showed Blaze what he was hiding. To her delight, it was a small square cake covered with purple icing and with a lit candle on top of it. Silver also had something wrapped in old newspaper. The hedgehog was smiling bashfully as he showed Blaze these items.

"Surprise!" he said "Happy Birthday Blaze. Hope you like the cake."

"Aww...Silver. You remembered. How wonderful! Thank you." said Blaze, touched by the gifts and taking them from Silver.

"Don't mention it, couldn't forget my best friend's birthday could I?" said Silver modestly.

Blaze was celebrating her eighteenth birthday today. She and Silver were now the same age until Silver had his next birthday, which came a few months later than Blaze's. Given how much of a wreck the world was, a birthday celebration never came out as grand and amazing as one would like it to but Blaze didn't mind, just Silver giving her a cake and a present was all she needed. Although she did often think back to birthdays back with the fire cats and how grand and joyous they often tended to be. Blaze pushed away the thoughts of her deceased family and friends so that she wouldn't break down in front of Silver, something she hated doing since it made Silver sad to see her looking sad and Blaze didn't like making her friend sad, especially on her birthday. Blaze broke the cake in half and she gave half of it to Silver. Silver smiled brightly and he and Blaze both munched away on the cake, enjoying the sweet flavour of the cake as they ate it. They even licked at the icing between munches, their taste buds so delighted at the flavour of the cake that they were practically dancing with joy. Blaze found herself really enjoying the icing on the cake, especially how it was coloured like her fur. It made it even lovelier for her as she ate it. Within a couple of seconds, the cake was finished and Blaze looked down at the gift she held in her other hand. Silver had given her some very nice gifts over the years. She remembered the new hair band Silver had given her last year to which she still wore even to this day. Blaze could hardly wait to see what this gift was going to be. Blaze opened up the newspaper and her eyes opened wide at what the newspaper contained. Silver's present for her this year…was a sparkling necklace with a golden chain and flame shaped pendants at the end of it. They burned a beautiful amber orange that was transparent, meaning if she were hold it up to the sunlight, the necklace would look like it was glowing. Blaze picked up the necklace and her face lit up like a starting ember with joy.

"Oh my goodness…I haven't seen one of these since my kingdom was flooded!" gasped Blaze "Oh Silver, how ever did you find this wonderful necklace?"

"Well as your eighteenth birthday was coming up, I thought I'd get

you something special." said Silver "I thought about your lost kingdom and I wondered if a gift from there would be a nice present for you. So using makeshift scuba-diving equipment, I went down under the water that your kingdom lies under and searched the ruins for anything that might have survived the flood. And while I was swimming around, I found that necklace. It was a little dirty and grimy when I got it up to the surface though so I cleaned it up to make it look nice. And now I've given it to you for your eighteenth birthday. I hope you like it."

"Like it? Silver, I LOVE it!" cried Blaze happily, putting it around her neck eagerly "This gives me wonderful reminders of my old kingdom! This necklace was available at many stalls in the kingdom's marketplace and was said to be a symbol of what the fire cat race stands for: courage, honour, grace and leadership. Just wearing a necklace like this was enough to make any fire cat feel like a true fire cat. Oh Silver, thank you so much. This is the best gift you have EVER given me."

Blaze showed her gratitude for the wonderful necklace by hugging Silver. Silver fought hard to keep himself from blushing as his best friend hugged him. He failed. Silver returned the hug and as he hugged the beautiful pyrokinetic cat, he was tempted to kiss her but he resisted the urge to do so. Better to wait and see if Blaze loved him like he secretly loved her first and not let this moment turn needlessly awkward and spoil the lovely mood. Silver and Blaze broke up the hug but Silver took Blaze's hands into his own and looked her directly in the eyes. It never ceased to amaze him how beautiful the lavender cat's golden eyes were to him. More beautiful than gold itself in his opinion.

"I'm so glad you like the necklace Blaze." said Silver happily "But that's not the best gift I've ever given you."

"Oh? Why not? I think it is." said Blaze, looking into Silver's yellow eyes and thinking to herself how wonderful they looked. Just as wonderful as her own golden eyes and as lovely and yellow as the sunlight itself was what she thought and they certainly complimented his handsome face very well.

"Well this next gift I'm going to give you is better than any trinket one

can possess." said Silver, clearing his throat and trying to steady himself before he grew nervous all of the sudden and spoilt his big chance to tell Blaze that he loved her.

"Aww Silver, you're so kind to me." said Blaze, clearly touched by how wonderful he could be to her "You got me another gift? What have I done to deserve so much kindness from you?"

"What have you done? I think being a good friend of mine, sticking close to me in my desire to save the future, sharing my dreams of a better world and staying with me through thick and thin are things you've done that deserve my kindness." said Silver with a cheeky grin on his face "And it's because of this as to why I've got you a second gift. And here it is."

Silver inhaled and exhaled for a minute before continuing. This was his moment, he couldn't falter now. Go for it was all he was saying in his mind. He had to let Blaze know his true feelings for her and if he didn't let her know now then he would be kicking himself for quite a while.

"Blaze, you are the most wonderful woman I have ever met." said Silver "You're strong, tough, brave, loyal, kind, caring, loving and above all, a wonderful person to be around."

Blaze blushed scarlet upon hearing those remarks.

"Silver…that's very charming of you to say but how is this a "second gift"?" she asked, hoping she didn't sound rude or anything.

"Well those words were merely the prelude. Now comes the real gift." said Silver with a rather dashing look on his face "Blaze, you may be surprised to hear me say this but…I love you Blaze."

Silver's face went pink as he said that. He was quite satisfied that he managed to get himself to say those words to Blaze and without stammering like an idiot too. Blaze put her hands to her mouth in astonishment.

"You…love me?" she gasped.

"Why yes, yes I do." said Silver "You're such a wonderful friend and

such a wonderful woman that I can't help but love you. I hope you're not horrified at this…"

"Silver." interrupted Blaze "I'm glad that you love me…because I love you too you handsome little hedgehog." she added, pulling Silver close to her body and staring lovingly into his eyes "You took me in when nobody else would and made my life worth living again. I've been loving you since the day you took me in and the fact you love me too makes me feel like my love for you is meaningful. And you know what? THAT is the best gift you've ever given me…the gift of love." she said with a seductive purr that made Silver tingle excitedly.

"Well…I don't know what to say other than this…" said Silver.

He wrapped his arms around Blaze's waist and gently pressed her against his body. Blaze wrapped her arms around Silver's neck and pulled him into a kiss. Their eyes closed, their lips locked and they formed a loving embrace that neither one wanted to break up for a while. As they kissed and hugged each other, both Silver and Blaze felt like the happiest Mobians in the world and this moment was proof that despite the sight of death everywhere in the world, love still lives on in this barren wasteland of a world. Love was going to fill Silver and Blaze with more hope of fixing the damage done to Mobius and since they were in love, they had more to fight for than ever before. Not only were they fighting for a better world, they were now fighting for a better world for their love to blossom. After a moment, the two broke up the kiss but they didn't break up their hug. It was like they wanted to remain in each other's arms for as long as they wanted. Silver and Blaze both smiled at each other as if they were ready to kiss again.

"This is the best birthday ever." said Blaze softly.

"Oh I dunno Blaze, I might be able to top this birthday on your next one…" purred Silver teasingly, tapping Blaze's nose playfully.

Blaze chuckled and she pulled Silver into another kiss, her hand behind his head and lightly stroking his quills as she kissed him again. Silver started to stroke Blaze's back in return as another loving moment between them sparked. But alas, this moment

couldn't last. Their kiss was interrupted by a sudden ear-splitting nose that made the hotel shudder as if even the old, wrecked building was intimidated by the noise. Silver and Blaze, still in each other's arms, stared up at the sky for that was where the sound came from. To their utter bewilderment, there was a large streak of light looming above them in the sky as if the sky had some sort of surreal looking eye that had just opened up randomly. The light was various different colours and had a dazzling glow that would blind anybody too close to it. It was about thirty-meters wide and practically yawning open at anyone looking at it. Silver and Blaze clutched each other tightly, nervous on what this thing was.

"W-w-what is that?" asked Silver worriedly.

"It doesn't look natural." said Blaze, remaining straight faced but like Silver, was worried about it too "It looks…abnormal. I think we should stay away from it."

"This has never happened before." said Silver "Is this…an after effect of the apocalypse that's come out to haunt us?"

"Or…is this what doomed the world in the first place and is now coming back to finish the job for good?" Blaze theorized.

Whatever it was, they knew it meant trouble. Anything supernatural often meant trouble, something that Silver had learnt after studying much of Mobius's history in his quest to find the cause of its destruction. And the eerie thing was, Silver didn't remember reading anything about this streak of light in any of the history books. Granted most of them were missing pages and maybe documented this streak of light but still, it was rather strange and surreal to him. Silver and Blaze backed away from the streak of light but unfortunately, they didn't back away quick enough. The streak of light began its usual strange routine of sucking something or somebody up into it. This time, Silver and Blaze were the unlucky victims. The streak of light pulled on them and given the size of it, its pull was quite strong. The streak of light had a stronger pull depending on its size after all. Silver and Blaze were pulled so hard that they didn't even have time to resist. They were pulled straight into the light in a matter of seconds and as they were swallowed up, the light closed behind them, vanishing into thin air and leaving the

world exactly as it was minus Silver and Blaze. Where they would end up was anyone's guess…

Over on Mobius Prime, the sinister, troubled and cold ice witch Blizzard was in her chilly lair and stirring up contents in a cauldron that sat proudly in the centre of her lair as if it was some kind of centrepiece for the lair. Blizzard was not a happy ice witch at all. A week ago, she had formulated a plan to take over Castle Acorn and it had been foiled by the insolent, abhorrent team of Royal Fighters that were led by Sally Acorn. She had come close to killing one of them after her Cold Death curse struck Sora Prower and left her on the verge of death but the Royal Fighters had managed to defeat her Ice Golem and force her to save Sora's life much to her chagrin. Throughout all of this, she had even found out a dark secret about the Kingdom of Acorn. The late King Max had been responsible for her cult's murder. She had found that out in his journal which she had come across while snooping in Castle Acorn's library. Unknown to her, Sally had burnt the journal, destroying the crucial evidence she could use against Sally in her claims to the throne of Castle Acorn. Regardless of any evidence to produce or not, Blizzard had more reasons than ever to take over New Mobotropolis. It had destroyed her life and she was determined to make it pay by eliminating the Royal Fighters and wiping out anything related to the Acorn family for good. After all, the Acorn family had wrecked her life so it deserved to be erased from existence, in her point of view that is. Blizzard had managed to escape confinement despite it seemingly obvious she was captured at the time and after a week's rest and recuperation, she was readying her spell once again, this spell being the one she had been planning to conduct the first time before switching to the Ice Golem. This spell would allow here to erect her own army of Ice Creatures, a spell that the Ice Mobians often used as a method of defence if somebody threatened them. One could say she was going the "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again" route. She had all but one ingredient for the spell and as she poured the fox fur into the cauldron, she stirred the contents around and waited for the liquid to settle. Once it settled, Blizzard crooned to herself.

"Aah, that's lovely and cool and the colour's looking very nice." said Blizzard "The spell will be ready to conduct soon. I just need the final ingredient, a piece of an elemental Mobian, and it'll be ready for activation. Once the spell is conducted, that puny Kingdom of Acorn will rue the day it ever decided to ruin my life!"

Just thinking about what she had read in the journal was enough to make Blizzard go ballistic so she had to fight hard in order to contain herself and stop herself going around the twist (uh, any further around the twist that is. Hee, hee, hee…).

"First their council treats me like dirt and drives me to murder and then they murder my cult just to prevent something that was never going to happen in the first place!" growled Blizzard "That abhorrent kingdom deserves NO sympathy from me and it must be destroyed and conquered! The Kingdom of Ice will rise in its stead and it'll be a kingdom with a clean image, unlike the nasty stain that is the Kingdom of Acorn! My beloved family…I promise you all that I will avenge your needless deaths."

Blizzard wiped away a tear as she thought about her deceased husband and children. She had once had a family and now because of King Max, they were gone and she would never see them again. A total shame since Blizzard had big plans for her children when they grew up. They would have made fine spell casters like she did and they could have brought great things to the cult. But thanks to the moronic actions of a senile old King Max, this could never be. Blizzard would make sure their deaths were avenged once this spell was cast. She just needed the last ingredient first and she began planning on how to obtain it.

"Now then, I daren't try my luck with that "Ruben" person again." she murmured "He's too well protected among the Royal Fighters. I'd best go out and get a water panther from Chun-Nan for there's plenty of them to go around." she decided "And so I'm not attracting too much attention, I'll just take an aqua-collar and be done with it. Last thing I need is somebody trying to track me down for murder and as I thoroughly believe, I don't kill people I have no beef with. So, off to Chun-Nan I go."

Blizzard wandered over to her ingredients counter and she picked

up a purple sphere from the counter. This, like before, would be used to teleport her over to Chun-Nan. Smoke bombs like this were very handy for witches like Blizzard and Blizzard certainly prided herself on having a big selection of them for occasions like this. Blizzard raised her arm and she prepared to throw the smoke bomb down on the floor but just as she took aim, her cauldron started bubbling furiously. This was how Ice Mobians were warned of any intruders traipsing about in their territory. Blizzard put the sphere away and she groaned furiously.

"Oh NOW what?!" she fumed.

She stomped over to her cauldron and she waved her arms around above the cauldron.

"Double, double, toil and trouble, liquid swirl and cauldron bubble!" Blizzard chanted "Reveal thy intruder, reveal thy face. Who dares to trespass among the habitat of the Ice Mobian race?"

The cauldron's liquid swirled around like a raging whirlpool in a fierce ocean and it made in image that showed Blizzard who the intruders were this time. To Blizzard's surprise, they weren't who she was expecting them to be. She had been expecting Royal Fighters but instead, she could see a silver coloured hedgehog with the most unusual quill-style she had ever seen and a lavender coloured cat in a purple coat lying face down in a pile of snow. The tear in the sky had spat them out here in White Acropolis and on Mobius Prime no less. Blizzard's face curled into a smile upon seeing this.

"I have no idea who these strangers are but this is fortunate indeed. A fire cat is in my parlour." she purred "Looks like I needn't go hunting for water-panthers after all. Pity it had to be a fire powered creature but I can deal with her easily. We Ice Mobians have ways of countering fire cats…"

With that said, Blizzard closed her eyes and she pointed at the wall. She murmured some strange words that sounded like they were from a dead language that only Ice Mobians would possibly know and as she chanted, a large rectangle shape began to form out of thin air. In a matter of moments, the shape finished forming and Blizzard opened her eyes to see her handiwork. She had made a

restraint bed that was made of heatproof metal and had clamps for the wrists and ankles. Ice Mobians made these during the Elemental War to restrain fire cat prisoners of war and they certainly worked like a charm. No fire cat had EVER managed to escape this tough restraint bed. Once Blaze was put in there, there was no getting out. Blizzard sank down into the ground and disappeared like a melting snowman. She was going to kidnap Blaze and use a part of her for the spell and once she used the part, her spell would be complete and her insidious plan would take flight…

Meanwhile, Silver slowly raised his head out of the snow he and Blaze had landed in. It had been a rather trippy experience for him and Blaze, being sucked up the tear in the sky and then just dumped into an enormous pillow of snow as if it thought they tasted vile and spat them out. At least they had landed on something soft and not on rock hard ground or that would have been more painful and much more unpleasant. The cold of White Acropolis was extremely bitter, practically biting at Silver's face like a nest of a thousand insects all swarming around him. Silver shivered a little. His fur would keep him warm for the most part but it was still cold and he could feel it as the icy breeze drifted over him. Silver brushed snow off of his face and he looked over at Blaze, who was also beginning to lift her head up too. Being a fire cat, she wasn't bothered by the cold at all. When you have fire powers, the cold is the least of your worries. Silver got up onto his knees and he put his arms around Blaze as she got up onto her hands and knees.

"Blaze! You OK?" asked Silver concernedly.

"I'm fine, are you OK?" asked Blaze, brushing snow off of her coat and fur.

"Never better." said Silver grimly "Where the heck did that weird light bring us?"

"Looks like a frigid wasteland to me." muttered Blaze, looking around and taking note of all the snowy mountains and the carpets of snow that stretched for miles around "And yet it reminds me much of White Acropolis. Only thing is, the sky's not orange, it's grey and

cloudy." she added, looking up at the sky and taking note of the colour.

"Yeah, the sky never changes colour in our timeline. It's forever orange." mused Silver "Maybe…this is White Acropolis in the past."

"I hope it is." said Blaze, her face dry and emotionless "Mobius in the past is the only place I'd want to suddenly be dumped on."

"Pity that light thing didn't pick somewhere a lot warmer." moaned Silver, clutching himself as his fur stood up on end to fight against the bitter cold of the snowy wasteland they were in "New Mobotropolis would have been nicer."

"You know that light in the sky…what do you think it was?" asked Blaze, putting her arms around Silver to warm him up for her body was always warm no matter what the temperature was "And why do you think it just sucked us up and then brought us here? Is it…trying to tell us something?"

"Maybe, maybe not." said Silver, enjoying the literal warm hug that Blaze was giving him "Although it reminds me of something my father told me about. He once told me that while unlikely, it is possible for worlds to get a "tear in the timeline" or as he often calls it, "a time rift". What's just happened to us sounds very similar to what he told me about time rifts. Maybe…that was what sucked us up."

"A time rift…are they dangerous?" asked Blaze, her voice quavering.

"Very." said Silver "According to my dad, a time rift means that space and time is in jeopardy and if they aren't stopped, they can doom not just worlds…but maybe universes too. I bet that's what's doomed Mobius and that time rift that appeared in the future is a painful reminder of what happened."

"But if that is the case then why is Mobius still clinging onto life?" asked Blaze "Time rifts would surely be more destructive then that wouldn't they?"

"They tend to be." murmured Silver "Maybe Mobius was spared the initial horror and 200 years later, the time rift's come back to finish what it started. It's just a theory though, I could be wrong."

"Sorry if this sounds rude but I HOPE you're wrong." said Blaze "We have no idea how to stop these time rifts should they get any worse. But…if it doomed Mobius in our past then why is one appearing in the future now?"

"They're not called "time rifts" for nothing Blaze." Silver noted, holding his finger up in the manner of some intelligent kid pointing out the rights and wrongs of something "No matter what timeline you live in, they can appear at any time. I just hope we can stop that thing before our future gets worse than it already is."

"I hope so too Silver." said Blaze "And to think my birthday was staring off nicely too…" she grumbled bitterly.

"Yeah." sighed Silver "We confess our love for each other and then BAM, time rift appears and we end up here. If this is Mobius in the past than we HAVE to warn Sonic and friends about the time rift. They've stopped many crazy things before, maybe they can stop the time rift."

"If not then what hope does Mobius have?" said Blaze gravely.

"What indeed?" said Silver, shaking his head sadly "You stay there while I fly up and see if I can see which way to go to get out of this place. I'll be right back."

Blaze stayed put like Silver told her to and Silver flew up into the air, a teal glow outlining his body as his psychic powers activated and he took to the skies. Silver flew up a good distance and he scanned the scenery all around him to see if he could see where White Acropolis ended. Blaze looked up at Silver and watched him. She couldn't help but wonder how people like Silver could bare to be so high up like that. Heights scared her (ironic considering she's a cat and cats love to climb) and she always shuddered to imagine herself at that kind of height. At least she wasn't up there with Silver though so she didn't have to worry…or didn't she? As Blaze waited for Silver to come out, Blizzard silently rose up from the snow behind

Blaze and clasped a hand around her mouth and wrapped her other arm around her torso! Blaze cried out in muffled surprise and before she could even try to break free, Blizzard pulled her back down into the snow. The two women disappeared from sight, leaving nothing behind but a flattened pile of snow where Blaze had once been. Just after Blaze had been snatched by Blizzard, Silver descended back down to the ground and relayed what he'd deduced.

"OK Blaze, the snow seems to thin out in the horizon in that direction." he said, pointing ahead of himself "And the mountains get smaller and smaller too, I think we should go that…"

He came to an abrupt halt when he suddenly realized that he was talking to himself and not Blaze. His eyes widened in horror as he looked around and saw that Blaze was gone! She had just vanished off the face of the earth! Silver looked around frantically.

"Blaze?! Blaze!" he cried out desperately "BLAAAAAAZE! Where are you?!"

He received no response. Silver could feel his stomach doing somersaults in panic. Where had his precious Blaze been taken? Were could she be? Why had she vanished? Silver had no idea but he was determined to find out.

"OK Silver, relax a minute, you won't find Blaze if you panic." he said to himself, taking deep breaths to keep himself under control "OK then…"

He observed the scene before him and took note of the flat area of snow where Blaze had been before. He put a finger to his lips and mused to himself.

"Hmm…maybe something grabbed her and took her down into the snow?" he suggested "Maybe an Ice Mobian of some kind. This looks like their dirty work. Well, let's find out."

With that said, Silver began to dig down into the snow in hopes of finding his girlfriend. His hands tore at the snow like shovels through soil and he tossed heaps and heaps of snow over his shoulder at a great speed.

"Hang on Blaze, I'll find you!" he said between digs, hoping that he would actually find Blaze down under the snow…

Down under the snow, Blaze had been taken to Blizzard's ice lair and had quickly been fastened to the heatproof restraint bed before she could even figure out what the heck had just happened. Clamps fastened shut around her wrists and ankles and held her firmly to the bed. Blaze's first initiative was to set herself alight only for that to fail since as you already know, the bed was heatproof. The bed was the perfect prison for any fire cat prisoner and the Ice Mobians had been very proud of it when they had used it during the Elemental War. Right now, Blizzard was proud of how well it worked in keeping Blaze tied down and helpless before her. Blaze soon realized that fire wasn't going to work so she struggled in her restraints, desperate to break free of the bed but to no avail. Not even somebody as strong as Knuckles the Echidna would even be able to break out of that bed had he been put in it so Blaze had no chance of getting free. Blaze finally decided to give up her pitiful struggling and she glowered at Blizzard, the Ice Witch stirring the contents of her cauldron again to make sure everything was still ready for the spell. She had no idea who she was but Blaze instantly knew that if this Ice Mobian was keeping her prisoner than she was bad news.

"I don't know who you are or why you've done this to me but if you don't release me right now I am so gonna fry you!" screamed Blaze furiously.

"Clam down you fiery little hot-head, I do not intend to keep you restrained for long." purred Blizzard sweetly "I just intend to take a piece of you and use it for my spell and then I shall set you free."

"If that's the case then why did you just ask nicely for what you want?" snapped Blaze crossly "You didn't have to kidnap me!"

"Well I wasn't prepared for you to suddenly get mad and start throwing fire at me so I just want to make sure you sit still like a good girl and let me take what I need." said Blizzard, strolling over to Blaze with a rather creepy smile on her face "You fire cats are rather bothersome to us Ice Mobians after all…"

"Who are you anyway?" demanded Blaze "And what do you want with me?"

"Of course, of course, introductions are always important aren't they?" laughed Blizzard "I am Blizzard the Ice Witch and I need you for my spell. You see, I have one more ingredient left and said ingredient is "a piece of an Elemental Mobian". You madam are an Elemental Mobian so therefore, I need you for the spell."

"You can't just use somebody for a spell, that's evil!" shrieked Blaze "And you can just try and take a piece of me, you're not getting so much as a bit of fur from me!"

"And how you intend to stop me is beyond my realm of thought given you're fastened to a heatproof restraint bed and aren't the least bit strong enough to break free." sneered Blizzard "And you needn't worry, I won't be chopping off a piece of you or anything." she added as if hoping to make Blaze settle down "I don't believe in inflicting grievous bodily harm to somebody I have no ill will against."

"So…what are you going to do?" asked Blaze cautiously.

"I'll take your fire-gem." she said, pointing to the small red gem in Blaze's forehead "I'll be so grateful if you can spare it for me. Don't worry about it though, I'm sure you can get another one."

"That fire-gem is the basis of all my fire powers and if you take it, I will lose what makes me a fire cat so I can't let you have it!" snarled Blaze "And I can't just "get another one", my kingdom lies under the ocean and I'm the only fire cat left!"

"Rubbish, the fire cats flourish and Black Acropolis is nowhere NEAR underwater! What poppycock are you talking you stupid child?!" snapped Blizzard furiously.

Blaze began to form an idea in her head. If she told Blizzard about the future, maybe she can convince the Ice Witch to let her go and then she could make Blizzard pay for restraining her and wanting to take her fire-gem.

"I'm not from around here!" retorted Blaze "I'm from the future and in

the future, Mobius is a wreck and the fire cat kingdom lies in ruins under hundreds upon hundreds of feet of water! Me and my friend Silver the Hedgehog have come back in time to prevent the disaster that dooms the world so if you can let me go, I can happily resume my mission and save Mobius from a doomed future."

Blizzard looked shocked to hear this and she stared incredulously at Blaze as if the cat had grown an extra head.

"You're from the future? And…Mobius is a wreck in the future?" Blizzard blubbered.

"Yes." said Blaze, praying that Blizzard would be convinced enough to release her.

"Poppycock!" Blizzard suddenly barked at the captive cat "We foolish Mobians have been predicting the end of the world for years and it's never happened! The most prominent example is when the Ancient Mobians predicted the world would end in the year 2012 and guess what? It's 2143 now, 131 years from now and is Mobius gone? I don't think it is! So don't you dare tell me lies like that you wretched fire cat!"

"I swear upon Mobius's future it's the truth!" screamed Blaze "If you let me go, I can PROVE it to you if you need convincing!"

"As if I'm going to let you slip out of my fingers that easily." growled Blizzard "I've been working far too long and too hard to try and conduct my Ice Amy spell and I'm not letting this singular opportunity slip away from me! Once I've taken your fire-gem, THEN you can show me the future and I can see what a disgusting liar you are."

"You will NOT have my fire-gem!" yelled Blaze.

"I will have your fire-gem even if I have to rip your entire head off just to get it." snarled Blizzard "And besides, you're in the present timeline, you can just go and meet the fire-cats alive now and get a new fire-gem so there's nothing for you to lose child. I get the final ingredient for my spell, you can easily replace it now you're here so why the fuss?"

"My fire-gem was bestowed to me by my mother and I will not disgrace her memory by losing it!" growled Blaze, her eyes pretty much burning with anger "And besides, you can't take it from me anyway, only a fire cat can remove the gem and I most certainly will not take it out for you!"

"We'll see about that you little brat…" growled Blizzard, reaching out for the red gem in Blaze's forehead.

The moment she touched it though, Blaze set herself alight and gave Blizzard's hand a horrendous scorching. She may not be able to burn through the restraints but that didn't stop her from lighting herself up with fire and keeping Blizzard off of her. Blizzard screamed a horrible, bloodcurdling scream of agony and she threw herself onto the floor, pressing her hand on the ice to cool it down. A hissing sound was heard as cold and hot made contact with each other and Blizzard sighed with relief as her hand cooled down from the burning. It had become bright pink after the scorching and Blizzard growled furiously in rage. Blaze just smirked at her.

"Touch me, you get burnt. Simple as that." she sneered.

"Fine…if you won't let me have your fire-gem then I shall take that necklace of yours instead!" yelled Blizzard, suddenly lashing out and grabbing the necklace Silver had given to her earlier.

She yanked it from around Blaze's neck before Blaze could even set herself alight and she carried it over to the cauldron. Blaze was horrified to see her beautiful birthday present being taken away like this and she pulled on her restraints desperately.

"No, please, you can't!" cried Blaze "That was a present from Silver to me! Don't you dare put it in the cauldron or I'll burn you to a crisp! And besides, it's not a piece of me! It won't work!"

"It's a necklace belonging to a fire cat." retorted Blizzard "That's all I need. I need a limb, an organ or an item of an Elemental Mobian. This necklace will suffice beautifully, especially since it's MADE by a fire cat."

"What spell are you hoping to conduct anyway?" asked Blaze.

"None of your business madam." snapped Blizzard "Now then, sit back and relax while I put conduct this spell at last."

"No! You can't use my necklace!" shrieked Blaze "Silver will be very upset when he hears that you've used his present for me for your spell!"

"To heck with that your so-called "Silver" thinks!" barked Blizzard "He can just get you another one, I'm sure there's plenty of necklaces he can get you! Now enough time wasting, let us begin…"

With that said, Blizzard dropped the necklace into the cauldron, Blaze watching helplessly as her wonderful birthday present disappeared into the chilling liquid that swirled around in the icy cauldron before Blizzard. The Ice Army spell was at long last, about to begin and once it was complete, Blizzard's insidious plan could commence at last…

Footnotes:

Blaze mentioned this in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 133

Oh dear! Blizzard's spell is about to begin! Can Blaze get free and stop her? Will Silver reach her in time and maybe stop the spell? Find out next time for Part 2 as the Impending Crisis continues...

Impending Crisis Part 2

Arc 22: Impending Crisis

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 163 and 164

Crisis on Infinite Mobiuses Prologue

Part 2: Frozen Fates

What had started off as a nice birthday for Blaze the Cat had quickly escalated into a day of despair. She and Silver the Hedgehog, her best friend now boyfriend, had confessed their love for each other at long last and had shared their first kiss with each other after Blaze had had cake and a present and then suddenly, a tear in the sky had come out of nowhere and had sucked them up into it. It had dropped them off in White Acropolis in Mobius's past and the two had begun theorizing on what the tear in the sky was, Silver himself guessing that it was actually a time rift and that it had to be stopped before disaster struck. Unfortunately, Blaze ended up getting kidnapped by Blizzard the Ice Witch before she and Silver could search for New Mobotropolis and warn Sonic the Hedgehog and his friends about the time rift and Blizzard had taken Blaze's fire necklace to use for her spell, said necklace being a present from Silver. Blaze was fastened to a heatproof restraint bed so she was completely helpless to stop Blizzard from using Silver's precious gift to her for the spell. Blizzard dropped the necklace into the cauldron and as it landed into the icy cold liquid that filled the cauldron top to bottom, it disappeared under it like a sinking ship and began to dissolve away into nothing just as any ingredient that gets dumped into the cauldron does. Blaze watched with dismay as her wonderful present dissolved away into the liquid and she glowered furiously at Blizzard, wishing she could just break out of her restraints and beat her up for this. But she couldn't so like it or not, Blaze could only sit back and watch furiously. After the necklace dissolved into the cauldron's broth, Blizzard cackled menacingly and stood before the cauldron, her arms raised and her eyes closed.

"The spell begins…now my Ice Army can rise up at last!" she cried out gleefully "When the army is formed, I shall name it the "Court of Ice". It's function will be to sentence the Royal Fighters to death and it shall also make me Queen Blizzard the Ice Witch, ruler of the Kingdom of Ice! Oooooh…I can just picture the beautiful kingdom now as it forms!"

Blaze heard all of this and she was horrified to hear what Blizzard was planning. She was going to kill the Royal Fighters and make her own kingdom to rule over? This she HAD to stop and fast! But how could she if she was fastened to a heatproof restraint bed that resisted her fire powers and was too strong for her to break out of? If only Silver was here! He could stop that mad witch easily! Blaze prayed that Silver would find her and would stop this evil spell from happening. For the moment, it seemed Blizzard was going to conduct this spell without a hitch. Blizzard began to wave her arms around and she chanted sinisterly. The cauldron glowed an icy blue aura as she chanted.

Powers of Ice, so strong and cold. I call upon thee, you have been told.

Powers of Ice, so beautiful and fair. I call upon thee, to give thine enemies a scare.

I need an army, an army so great. I need an army to destroy those I hate.

An army of ice creatures, one full of might. An army of ice creatures, one that can truly fight.

Hear my pleas, I call for an army of ice! Hear my pleas, an army that will deliver the final slice.

Army of Ice, I need thee now! Arise from thy depths and…

If there was ever a living example of bad luck then what followed next was surely that living example. Blizzard literally had three more words to chant and just as she was getting to them, some snow fell down from the ceiling and landed with a plonk on her head. Blizzard was stopped mid-sentence by that and she shook her head to get

the snow off. She ignored it and was about to carry on but then more snow fell on her head, stopping her dead in her tracks. Blaze looked up at the ceiling to see what was going on. She hoped that it was Silver about to come through the ceiling and stop this madness. Another clump of snow landed on Blizzard's head and she wiped it off, clearly getting annoyed at this. She glared up at the ceiling…and ended up getting a face full of snow as more fell from it. Blizzard wiped the snow off her face.

"Why is the ceiling dropping snow all of the sudden?!" she growled "You'd better not be heating the lair up and causing the ceiling to melt fire cat!" she shot accusingly at Blaze with a twisted glare on her face.

"In case you haven't noticed, I'm not even alight." snapped Blaze "And fire cats can't make things melt just by being in a room, we're not THAT hot. I think…somebody's trying to get in from up above." she added with a sly smirk on her face. Even if she didn't know who it was, she had a feeling Blizzard might be in trouble now.

Blizzard looked up again and noticed how in the middle of the ceiling, the snow seemed to be shifting slightly and that was what was causing it to start dripping on her. And the curious thing was, as it persisted, Blizzard swore that she could hear the sound of hands digging up snow from up above as if somebody was trying to dig their way into her lair. The thing that fully confirmed her suspicions was a gloved fist with a teal symbol on it suddenly punching through the snow and sending heaps of it falling onto Blizzard and some of it even landed into the cauldron. Blaze nearly went crazy with excitement for she knew that gloved hand from anywhere. The hand retracted back up through the newly formed hole in the ceiling and then an entire body broke through the ceiling, making the hole even bigger and causing heaps upon heaps of snow to collapse into the ice cave that Blizzard had set her lair up in. The thing that had broken through the ceiling was Silver the Hedgehog! He had been digging away quite frantically for the amount of time Blizzard and Blaze had been talking and now he'd finally managed to break through the ceiling and into the lair! Silver brushed some snow off of himself and he looked around to see where he was. He was gobsmacked to see that he had ended up in some kind of ice cave

that had a chilling cauldron with icy liquid in it and a counter full of ingredients for the spells that might be conducted in the cauldron. Given he thought he was dealing with Ice Mobians, he had sort of been expecting this. Blizzard just stood there in total obfuscation, her mouth hanging open in surprise and her eyes open so wide that they nearly covered her entire face.

"Wh…at?!" she blurted "How…how did you…?!"

Silver turned around to face Blizzard and he pointed his finger like a pistol at the Ice Witch.

"OK Ice Mobian, you better let my friend Blaze go or I'm gonna give you a big headache!" he threatened.

"Silver! Thank goodness!" cried Blaze happily "You stopped Blizzard from conducting her spell!"

"I…I did?" said Silver, looking a little confused for her had no idea he had just interrupted something.

"You did indeed." said Blaze "I'll explain more later, just get me out of here quickly!"

Silver did not wait to be asked twice. He activated his psychic powers and he aimed his hands at the restraint bed. The clamps around Blaze's wrists and ankles glowed teal as Silver's psychokinesis took a hold of them and as Silver clenched his fists and pulled his arms back, the clamps buckled and bent horribly out of shape before finally being ripped clean out of their sockets, freeing Blaze from their grasp. Blizzard just gaped at what she had just seen. A psychic powered Mobian?! Whoever heard of such a thing?! She certainly knew that Silver was one to worry about just like Blaze was and she'd have to deal with him too. Blaze was up on her feet in a millisecond and she set her hands alight. Blizzard, who had finally managed to snap out of her shocked trance, clenched her fists tightly and she growled like a wild dog at Silver and Blaze.

"You silver miscreant! How dare you free my prisoner!" she roared "And don't you think about getting away fire cat! You will not evade me so easily!"

"We'll see about that you cold-hearted cretin…" said Blaze, her voice even colder than the scenery around her.

Blaze threw a jet of fire at Blizzard and made her back off hastily as she was scorched by the fire. If there was anything that hurt Blizzard more than anything else in the world, it was fire. Fire was an Ice Mobian's biggest weakness and enemy and Blizzard had hoped never to fight against fire in her life. Now Blaze was here to completely destroy that hope and as she threw fire at Blizzard, the Ice Witch screamed a horrible scream of agony as she was scorched by the furious fire cat. Blaze put out her fire for the moment and she jumped towards Blizzard in rage. She stretched her foot out and kicked her squarely in the head. Getting kicked by a high-heeled shoe was always going to be painful for anybody who got kicked by it, especially as when Blaze kicked Blizzard in the face, the heel of her shoe butted her rather sharply and left a slight cut on her cheek just where the cheekbone is. Blizzard was thrown onto the floor by the kick and as she landed with a thunk on her side, all she could do was lie there in pain as the ice cold floor began to soothe the scorching pain of Blaze's fire attacks and she put a hand over her cheek in anguish. Now Blizzard was down, Blaze saw to tipping Blizzard's cauldron over and spilling the contents onto the floor. She accomplished this with a powerful upwards kick, alit with fire for extra power, and the cauldron wasn't just tipped over by that kick. It was literally flung across the room as if it weighed nothing! The cauldron crashed into the wall with a heavy smash and the wall cracked, forming spider-web patterns as the heavy metal of the cauldron violently clashed with the fragile ice of the wall. Bits of ice splintered down onto the floor after that crash and the cracks began to expand little by little. Silver chuckled nervously.

"Uh Blaze, I think you over did it there." he said sheepishly.

"That heathen deserved it." muttered Blaze bitterly "Taking my present and using it for her spell like that…"

"She what?!" gasped Silver in astonishment.

"Later Silver, we need to get out of here before this cave caves in on us." said Blaze quickly.

Silver agreed and he activated his psychic powers, a teal aura surrounding his body as he prepared to take flight. But before he and Blaze could go anywhere, Blizzard picked herself up and she scrambled over to the ingredients counter furiously. She grabbed something off the counter and she aimed it at Blaze. The thing she had gotten from the counter was a little red sphere that would have fitted right into a game of ping pong ball. As she stood before Silver and Blaze with her item ready to throw at Blaze, Silver could see the damages done to her by Blaze's fire. Her white fur had been singed a little, splotches of black dotted all around her as if she had been playing in a coal mine and her muzzle was bright pink from the scalding. Her clothes were singed too. She looked dreadful to say the least and her face was contorting with indescribable contempt and hatred, her eyes fixed squarely on the impudent fire cat that had dared to scorch her like this.

"I'll teach you to roast me like a Christmas Turkey!" barked Blizzard "Let us see how well you fight me without your powers!"

She threw the sphere at Blaze but Silver stood in front of her and prepared to stop the sphere from hitting either of them. But Blizzard had thrown the sphere too fast and Silver only just had time to get in front of it. The sphere hit him and exploded into a cloud of crimson gas that made him cough and splutter as it trickled down his throat and stung his eyes. The gas cleared away after a moment and Silver wiped his eyes better. He coughed again and he glowered at Blizzard. The gas didn't seem to have done anything so far luckily. Silver held out his hands and tried to use his psychic powers. But much to his surprise, he couldn't make himself fly! His body didn't even glow teal as he held his hands out and willed for his powers! Silver didn't understand what was going on. He tried again but nothing happened. Blaze looked at Silver in concern. Had Blizzard caused him to lose his powers suddenly? She shot a frightening glance at Blizzard.

"What have you done to him you freak?!" exclaimed Blaze crossly.

"Yeah, what have you done to me?!" cried Silver "Why won't my powers work?"

"I threw a power stopper at him, that's what." replied Blizzard "Power

stoppers are magical items that Ice Mobians mostly used against the fire cats in the Elemental War. Once stricken by this magical sphere, the victim loses his or her powers momentarily and you can bet that this wonderful item was very useful against the fire cats during that war. I had been saving the one I had for a special occasion and sadly, your silver friend made me waste it on him. Oh well, I guess I'll have to stop you using other methods instead. You're not leaving this place until my spell is complete you little brat!"

"The name is Blaze actually and who's gonna stop me and Silver from escaping here with our lives?" snorted Blaze, throwing a wall of fire at Blizzard and throwing her off her feet.

Blizzard bellowed with pain as she was seared by the fire yet again but her cries were quickly silenced by her body slamming roughly against the wall as the fire swept her into it. Blizzard tensed up tightly and she fell down onto the floor with a thud. That attack had left her feeling very weak and very pained, so pained in fact that she couldn't even stand back up. Blizzard tried to pick herself up but the searing pain of her burns and scalds were too much for her. She lay there on the floor in defeat. Blizzard had no choice but to wait for her burns to cool down and the pain to ease a little before she could fight back. Blaze just shot a glare of seething contempt at Blizzard. Her glare pretty much said "You are dead meat if I ever see you again!" and if she said that with her mouth rather than her eyes, she would have meant every word of it. Since Silver couldn't use his powers, he couldn't use them to fly him and Blaze up into the hole in the ceiling and out of the cave. So it was up to Blaze to get them out of the cave this time. When you have fire powers, ice and snow are no obstacle for you. Blaze ran over to the wall and she used her fire powers to melt through the ice and form an escape exit for her and Silver. The fire blazed from Blaze's hands and licked at the walls, melting them easily as they flickered. She melted enough ice to make a huge hole that led outside the cave and she and Silver both ran for it before Blizzard could stop them. Blaze's melting of the ice had ended up making the cave a little unstable. Given the fact there was already a cracked wall that had been getting worse and worse by the second and now a wall had been melted away to make an escape exit, the cave was well on its way to caving in. Blizzard could sense this and used whatever energy she had left to melt down into

the floor and flee the cave just as the cracks reached the ceiling and snow and ice began to plummet down to the floor like falling meteors. Blizzard would need a new lair after this and once she caught up with Blaze and Silver, she was going to make them pay for this. They wouldn't escape her for long. She would catch them and then she would show them what happens to those who mess with an Ice Witch…

Meanwhile, Silver and Blaze were running as fast as they possibly could through the deep blanket of snow that stretched for miles around in this winter wonderland they were in. Their feet scrunched away like crazy as they ran for it and trails of footprints were left behind in their frantic dash. They didn't have time to cover their tracks and throw Blizzard off the trail though, they had to get as far away from her as possible. Silver had read history books about the Elemental War and knew perfectly well how dangerous an Ice Mobian in its natural territory can be. Blizzard maybe down for the moment but Silver had a nasty idea she wouldn't be going down without a fight so the quicker they get away from her, the better. Especially considering his powers had been momentarily stripped from him by that magical curse Blizzard had put on him. Silver hoped that his powers wouldn't be lost for long because he could really do with flying through the air right now. Blizzard would never catch him and Blaze up in the air. As they ran for it, Silver looked over at Blaze.

"So Blaze, who was that witch back there and what was she up to?" he asked between sprints.

"Her name is Blizzard the Ice Witch and she's a monster!" explained Blaze "She was trying to make an army of ice creatures and she's going to kill the Royal Fighters and make her own kingdom to rule with it!"

"That's disgusting!" exclaimed Silver in disgust "How could anyone be so evil?!"

"Beats me." muttered Blaze "And in order to complete her spell, she needs a piece of an Elemental Mobian, that's why she kidnapped

me. She tried to use my fire gem but I wouldn't let her touch it so she stole my necklace and used that for the spell. Thankfully, you burst in and ruined it before she could complete it." she added with a smile at Silver.

"So I guess that's what you meant earlier." said Silver, now feeling very pleased with himself to hear that he'd stopped an evil spell dead in its tracks "I can't believe Blizzard took your necklace to use for the spell though. I spent ages getting that for you!" he whined.

"I'm mad at her for that too Silver, but I'm sure that now we're in the past I can get myself another one." suggested Blaze "So anyway, we definitely need to get to New Mobotropolis and warn the Royal Fighters now! Not only of this time rift that brought us here, but of Blizzard too."

"I wouldn't be surprised if they already know about her." said Silver grimly "She seems like the kind of villain they fight on a regular basis. Still though, never hurts to tell them what she's up to."

"They'll stop her insidious plan easily and I'd be all too happy to help them with that." murmured Blaze "Nobody tries to take something from me and uses it for their evil plans and gets away with it!"

"Once my powers come back, she's gonna have a migraine that'll last a week!" declared Silver.

Then suddenly, Blaze skidded to a halt and she held her arm out to stop Silver before he could go any further. The resulting halt ended up causing Blaze to accidentally knock Silver down onto his bottom. Silver picked himself up and wondered what it was that had made Blaze stop so suddenly. He soon found out though for he looked ahead and saw he and Blaze had reached a straight plummet to certain death. The path they had been taking just stopped right there and over the edge was a deep crevasse that stretched for meters down below. The ground was eighty feet down from where they were and the other side of the crevasse was a good few feet across. Far too wide for them to jump and since Silver's powers weren't working, he couldn't just fly them over. Silver did have a go to see if he could use his powers again. He tensed up and willed for his psychokinesis to happen. It didn't. His body didn't glow and he

wouldn't levitate. The curse's effects hadn't lifted yet. Silver stopped trying and he fumed to himself.

"Stupid Ice Witch…" he groaned "I still can't use my powers! I wish it'd hurry up and wear off already! She did say it was momentarily after all!"

"Momentarily doesn't always give us an idea on how long it lasts." noted Blaze "You could be powerless for a whole hour for all we know, maybe longer."

"Well we can't sit here and wait for this power stopper thingy to wear off, we HAVE to get across that crevasse." declared Silver "If we sit and wait, Blizzard will catch up to us."

"But how can we cross if you can't fly us over?" asked Blaze.

"We'll use that." said Silver, pointing to his right.

Blaze turned to her right and saw that on the side of the crevasse was a tall ice covered mountain that had a very narrow walkway that led to the other side of the crevasse. The walkway didn't look very safe to use. One wrong step and you would plummet before you could realize what had happened. Blaze looked nervous.

"Are you sure?" she said worriedly "I mean, we're so high up and that thing doesn't look very safe! We might fall."

"Blaze, I know you're scared of heights and all but we have to use that to get across. There's no other way." said Silver gently.

"I'm NOT scared!" lied Blaze, scowling at Silver as if he'd just offended her by even *thinking* for a minute she was scared "I just… feel uneasy when I'm high up."

"Nice try Blaze but I know the difference between scared and uneasy." snickered Silver teasingly.

"I AM NOT SCARED!" bellowed Blaze "Come on then, let's just get across this stupid crevasse!"

She stormed off over to the walkway as if willing to prove to Silver

she wasn't afraid of heights by going across the walkway despite the immense drop below. Silver knew it was kinda mean to tease Blaze about her fears but in cases like this, it was the only way to tempt her to get on with it and ignore her fear of heights for the moment. It always seemed to work too, much to Silver's pleasure. They had to move it or Blizzard would catch up to them and without his psychokinesis, Silver wouldn't be of much good against her and Blaze would only hold her off for so long before she was quickly overpowered by the sinister Ice Witch. Her fire powers may seriously hurt Blizzard but Blizzard was in her own territory, a paradise of snow and ice that blanketed the mountain tops of White Acropolis and gave it its fitting name. Blizzard would easily bring Blaze down if she used her full power. Pleased that he'd tempted Blaze to get a move on, Silver hurried after her and the two began to trek slowly across the walkway. It was awfully narrow in width. So narrow in fact that Silver and Blaze had to press their backs to the wall and side-step across in order to traverse it. That just made Blaze feel even more anxious since narrow ledges like this made it all the more easier for her to fall. When it came to heights, it wasn't just the height of something that made her a nervous wreck; it was the thought of falling off of them that truly terrified her. As Blaze side-stepped slowly across the walkway and over to the other side of the crevasse, she fought hard to keep herself from looking down at the ground. She closed her eyes tightly and she cautiously side-stepped slowly and steadily as if ever single step spelled doom for her. Her heart was thumping in her chest like somebody trying to break through a wall and her head and hands rained with sweat. Blaze inhaled and exhaled furiously to try and calm herself down. Silver watched his girlfriend progress anxiously and he felt terribly sorry for her. It must be hell for poor Blaze having to do this and he wished his powers would start working again so he could put an end to this torture for her. He almost began wishing he hadn't tempted Blaze to do this but if they were going to move on, they had to do what they could even if it mean traversing a dizzyingly high walkway. As Silver and Blaze moved slowly across the walkway, bits of ice began to sprinkle down into the black depths below. Blaze opened one eye a little bit to see how far she had gotten. She accidentally looked down and suddenly grew petrified with fear. Her whole body began trembling with fright as she eyed the plummeting depths that awaited her should she fall. Not wanting to admit to Silver she was

afraid, she tried forcing herself

to clam down and she closed her eyes again.

"Don't look down…don't look down…don't let the height bother you…" she murmured to herself frantically.

She took another step but quickly retracted her foot as she felt the spot she'd stood on suddenly crumble away. Shards of ice rained down from the walkway and down the mountain into the open mouth of the crevasse. One wrong move and Blaze would be joining them. Blaze gasped in fright, clutching her pounding chest and panting furiously.

"Silver! I can't do it! I can't do it!" whimpered Blaze "I want to go back, I can't go on anymore!"

"Blaze, I thought you said you weren't afraid." said Silver.

"I'm NOT afraid!" protested Blaze "I told you, I feel uneasy when I'm high up! I can't stand this height! Please can we go back and get off already?"

"No Blaze, we must keep going." urged Silver "If we go back, we'll be helping Blizzard catch us, we MUST get to the other end."

"Please! I can't do it anymore!" cried Blaze frantically "Please don't make me go any further Silver!"

Silver took Blaze's hand into his own and gave her a reassuring squeeze. He could see his girlfriend was in a panic right now and he was determined to calm her down. If she didn't, she wouldn't make it across alive.

"Blaze, we won't fall." Silver promised "Trust me, we won't fall. If we keep this steady and keep firmly against the wall then we will make it. I promise you, we won't fall. As for the height, don't think about the heights. Close your eyes and think of something nice. Don't think about what's down, just think about whatever nice thing you can. Can you do that for me…my love?" he added as if to remind Blaze the two had just become a couple before this whole thing happened.

Blaze gulped but she took in Silver's words and began to relax. Silver could feel her hand in his own beginning to relax and become still again, the trembling dying down as if draining out of her. Blaze took a deep breath and she sighed, this sigh sounding very content and cooled down. Silver's encouragement seemed to have worked.

"I can…I can do that." said Blaze softly "Although the nicest thing I can possibly think of is right here beside me." she added with a loving smile on her lips "I'll think purely about you as we do this Silver. That'll get me across easily."

"That's more like the Blaze I know and love!" cried Silver cheerily "Come on then, let's go Blaze!"

Blaze nodded agreeably and she closed her eyes, not tightly this time so she could remain relaxed and not feel so tense. As she closed her eyes, she thought about the nicest thing she could possibly think of: Silver confessing his love for her earlier. Blaze replayed that wonderful scene from earlier over and over in her brain. Soon she ended up forgetting she was even on a ledge that had a drop spanning hundreds of feet down below. All she could think of right now was the birthday gifts from earlier and Silver proclaiming his love for her, as well as their first kiss together. Blaze kept thinking about those things as she continued to side-step across the walkway. Silver followed her, keeping close behind but making sure he didn't step on Blaze's foot or accidentally bump into her as she made her way along. He was pleased that his girlfriend had managed to forget about the heights for now. And as luck would have it for the two future dwellers, the other side was just a few steps away! They were going to make it! Silver and Blaze continued side-stepping across and across the walkway until finally, they stepped off of the icy ledge and onto the soft pillow of snow that awaited them as they stepped off of it. Blaze could feel her foot go scrunch on the snow and she opened her eyes, her thoughts disappearing and her mind slipping back to reality. Her face beamed with joy as she saw the snow underneath her feet. She'd made it across and now she wouldn't have to worry about the heights anymore! Blaze put a hand over her chest and sighed happily.

"Oh thank goodness…we made it." she gasped with relief "Oh Silver, thank you so much for helping me get across that ledge." she

added, grasping her boyfriend in a loving embrace of gratitude.

"Anything for you Blaze." said Silver modestly "I'm proud of you for being so brave and trying to get across despite your fear of heights. It was very brave of you."

"Thank you." said Blaze happily "Hopefully someday I'll get over this stupid phobia…"

Silver nodded. Blaze would need to conquer her fear of heights someday soon or she would end up in a tough spot. Now the horror of getting across the narrow walkway was over, Silver and Blaze ran off again. Hopefully, Blizzard wouldn't be able to get across the ledge and they would have eluded her for good but something in Silver's mind made him doubt that a deep crevasse would stop Blizzard from trying to catch them. The Ice Witch would probably just fly over it or something so the crevasse wouldn't even slow her down much to Silver's dismay. Blizzard would get across and then Silver and Blaze would have her right on their tails so they had to get a move on. The cat and hedgehog ran for about thirty yards before suddenly, a pair of hands shot out from the ground beneath them and snagged them both. The hands gripped Silver and Blaze tightly, the two trying desperately to break free of their grasp. Bigger limbs often have a tougher grip to break out of and such was the case with this marvellously enormous snow hands that held them both. They could not get free so easily. The hands lowered down to the ground but stopped just beneath the wrist section so Silver and Blaze were held a little bit above the ground. They could only look ahead in defeat as Blizzard suddenly emerged from the snow like a demon rising from the pits of hell itself and she strode up to them, her face a cruel smirk of triumph as she approached her imprisoned captives.

"Well, well, well…looks like I caught you both." she crowed "You got a good distance away from me but even then, you couldn't evade me. Now I've got you both, I will be dissecting Blaze so that I maybe able to complete my spell, this time actually having ALL the ingredients on me from the start. As for you Silver, I'll just keep you around in case I ever need a piece of you for any future spells." she crooned smoothly, a sadistic grin curling on her lips that made her look like a living she-devil.

"You won't harm Blaze and you won't keep me as your little prisoner Blizzard!" yelled Silver "We're gonna stop you and you'll be sorry you dared to plot against the Royal Fighters!"

"I sincerely doubt that you vexing little moron." scoffed Blizzard "And if you're wondering why I'm doing this, I have a very good reason for wanting to be rid of the Royal Fighters and wanting to replace their kingdom with my own! You know Queen Sally Acorn at all? Her father murdered my cult and all because his feeble old mind decided to jump to conclusions about me! Thanks to King Max's actions, my life has been a lonely, miserable existence and once I erase the Kingdom of Acorn off the map, I will have avenged my cult and gotten justice for all the wrongdoings I endured at their hands!"

Silver and Blaze looked at each other in bewilderment. They had seen and heard many crazy things in their lives but this was the craziest thing they'd ever heard. King Max, the father of Sally Acorn, murdered Blizzard's cult? Given Sally's good nature and all, they really found this hard to believe and even came to the conclusion Blizzard was making excuses to commence with her baneful ambitions like the wolf from the Aesop fable "The Wolf And The Lamb" did when wanting to eat a poor baby lamb. They glowered at Blizzard as if they were disgusted by her accusations.

"You are a lair!" accused Silver "We've read much about the Acorn Family! They'd never do a thing like that!"

"Of course you two morons don't believe me…" sighed Blizzard in annoyance "I'm always the bad guy when it comes to anyone who's not an Ice Mobian! Well if you two need convincing then I shall go to Castle Acorn, find Max's journal and let you see him for the man he truly was! He confesses the crime in his own words in the journal if you don't believe me!"

"Don't bother because you're not going anywhere near Castle Acorn!" yelled Blaze "Especially since I'm gonna burn you alive and leave your charred remains to be buried by the snow around here!"

With that said, Blaze set herself on fire and the flames around her body melted the snow hand that was holding her. Blizzard really should have known better than to try and hold Blaze with snow since

heat is snow's biggest weakness. Now free, Blaze lashed out at Blizzard and gave her a fiery punch to the face that threw her to the side and then she added a fiery uppercut to the face that whisked Blizzard off her feet and sent her spiralling through the air and into a heap of snow just meters away. With the enemy for the moment, Blaze was free to get Silver out of the snow hand holding him. She blazed away at the snow hand with a tornado of fire she shot out of the palm of her hand. The tornado ate away at the snow hand, the hand melting away into a slushy puddle and freeing Silver from its solid grip. Silver leaped away from the slushy mush the hand had been reduced too and he spotted Blizzard trying to get up. Silver thrust his hands forward and he tried his psychokinesis to see if it would work. To his delight, his body began to glow teal and he could feel the psychic energies surging through his bloodstream as he willed his powers to work! The power stopper had worn off at last! Blizzard would be fitting a losing battle now Silver AND Blaze could use their powers together again. Blaze beamed at the sight of Silver's psychokinesis working again and watched with great amusement as Silver used his powers to pick Blizzard up off the ground as if she were merely a toy and he brought Blizzard over to himself. He held Blizzard above his head for the moment and then he threw his arm down. This caused Blizzard to fly through the air like baseball that's been smacked by the player's bat. She hurled a good distance away and came down with a heavy thud in the snow face first. Blizzard grumbled to herself, not pleased that Silver's powers had returned. Fighting a fire-powered cat was bad enough but a psychic-powered hedgehog too?! Blizzard was not going to let them defeat her so easily though. She sunk down into the snow and then reappeared directly in front of the two future Mobians. She thrust her arms up and without warning, two snow fists shot up from the ground and sent Silver and Blaze flying into the air. Silver stopped himself with his psychokinesis and he caught Blaze with a psychic grip before she could begin to plummet. Silver rocketed back down to the ground with Blaze by his side and her threw Blaze ahead of him, releasing his psychic hold on her as he swiped his arm forward. Blaze summoned fire around herself and she caused herself to spin in a fiery tornado that whizzed towards Blizzard like a homing missile. As her body spun, flames spiralled all around her and transformed her into nothing more than a blazing spinning top. Blizzard feebly tried to stop Blaze by summoning ice hands from the

ground but predictably enough, Blaze just melted her way through them and struck Blizzard like an arrow hitting its target. Blizzard was blown off her feet by the attack and she winced tensely, wondering what had just hit her. Blizzard lunged at Blaze only to be halted in mid-leap by Silver's psychokinesis. Silver raised his hands, lifting Blizzard up a little and then he threw them down again, sending Blizzard slamming down into the snow. Blizzard roared furiously and she thrust her arms out. Showers of icicles shot out from nowhere and they all whizzed towards Silver and Blaze. Silver stopped them with his psychic powers and Blaze summoned a wall of fire that stopped the icicles before they could even touch her. Blizzard merely did that as a distraction though. She summoned another pair of ice hands from behind Silver and Blaze and the hands slammed down on top of them as if they were squashing flies. Silver and Blaze were buried under heaps of snow but they weren't buried for long. Blaze's flames melted through the snow and she was up on her feet again in no time. Silver used his psychokinesis to lift some snow off of himself and he even made it into a giant snowball. He threw the snowball at Blizzard but Blizzard caught it by summoning a snow hand to catch it. She made the hand throw it back at Silver but Silver caught it and threw it away before it got anywhere near him. Blaze set her hands alight and fired a blazing spiral of flames at Blizzard. Blizzard sank down into the ground to avoid Blaze and she reappeared behind the pyro kitty. She fired icicles at Blaze, the sharp shards ripping shreds off her clothes as they slashed past her body and Blaze screamed in anguish. Quickly, she set herself alight to stop the icicles from hurt her but Blizzard lashed out and punched her in the back of her head, throwing her into the snow face first and stopping her fire for the moment. Blaze grimaced as she rubbed her head better and Blizzard seized her by the coat. Silver flew towards Blizzard to try and help Blaze but Blizzard summoned another snow hand and the hand grabbed Silver and slammed him down into the ground. Now he was out of the way, Blizzard summoned an ice dagger to her hand and she held it over Blaze's heart.

"I need an organ, a limb or an item of yours for the spell and given how much grief you've given me…I'll take an organ of yours." Blizzard said in a slithering voice that made Blaze's skin crawl "I think your heart will suffice nicely. Don't worry, it won't hurt too much. You'll be dead before the pain even registers."

"My heart is staying where it belongs and your spell will never see completion!" exclaimed Blaze.

She grabbed Blizzard's hand and kept held it away from her so the dagger was no longer positioned over her chest. Blizzard fought back to try and stab Blaze but Blaze was much too strong for Blizzard. Blaze squeezed her wrist so hard that Blizzard's hand started to go numb and she dropped the dagger. Now Blizzard had no weapon, Blaze threw her arms aside and then she kicked Blizzard in the gut. Blizzard doubled over in pain and Blaze then slammed her fists, which were alit, on the Ice Witch's head. Blizzard collapsed onto the ground, momentarily dazed for the moment. Now she was down, Blaze ran over to Silver and she helped him out of the heap of snow he was buried in from the snow hand slamming him down earlier. Silver brushed snow off of himself and he readied for another attack. Blizzard picked herself up and she summoned a new ice wand that she had made for herself after Cosmo had broken her first wand. She aimed the wand at Silver and Blaze and bellowed "Shazam…BANG!" The wand fired a burst of magical energy that struck Silver and Blaze point blank and sent them catapulting backwards across the snow covered ground for a few meters. They both came down with a thump and they groaned in pain, wondering what in the world had just hit them. It was almost as if they had been punched by a giant fist. Blizzard sank down into the ground and she rose up again in front of Silver and Blaze. She aimed her wand at them and prepared to use its deadly attack again. But as she said the word "Shazam…" and prepared to say "bang", Blaze kicked her hand upwards and made Blizzard shoot ahead of her instead. The powerful shot whooshed through the air and much to the bad luck of the three Mobians…it hit a snow covered mountain that loomed not far from where they were! A loud resonant bang echoed through the valley ominously as the shot hit its target and then low rumblings were beginning to happen. Blizzard dropped her wand in horror. Blaze had inadvertently caused her to start an avalanche! Tonnes upon tonnes of snow began to roar down the mountain that had been hit and they swept their way down the slopes and towards Silver, Blaze and Blizzard! It was almost like watching waves on the beach coming towards you only much worse. Silver and Blaze stared in terror at the cascades of snow that were whooshing down towards them like stampeding wildebeests.

"AVALANCHE!" screamed Silver "Blaze, let's get outta here now!"

Blaze obeyed instantly and she ran for it as fast as she could. Silver ran for it too and was about to take off but just as he ascended, Blizzard summoned an ice-hand from the ground and it grabbed Silver. It sank back down to the ground, leaving Silver stuck in the snowy ground with only his head visible above the snow. Blaze stopped running and she saw to helping her boyfriend before he was buried alive. Blizzard decided to leave the avalanche to them and she sank down into the snow. Avalanches would never get her or indeed any Ice Mobian around. Blaze used her fire powers to melt away some snow around Silver and make it easier for him to get out of this trap he was in. Silver managed to break free thanks to Blaze but as Blaze helped him up, the avalanche caught up to the two and swept them both away! Silver and Blaze were swept away by tonnes of sweeping snow. Anyone caught up in an avalanche usually has no chance of surviving it but Blaze had just the thing to help her get through the avalanche alive. She set herself alight and managed to get above the piles of snow, gasping for breath. She couldn't see Silver anywhere though. Had he been swept away in the avalanche and was beyond her reach now? Blaze began to worry. She might well have lost Silver right about now and if that was the case, he'd never find out what doomed Mobius in the future and it'd be all up to her to do it now. Blaze kept herself alight so she could easily swim through the snow and search for Silver. Every stroke she took had a prayer in between, a prayer that Silver was OK. Blaze didn't want to think about him being dead. She looked all around the shifting snow and desperately tried to spot Silver somewhere among the avalanche. It was like trying to find an ant in a nest of termites, a search that was more than likely futile and wouldn't be worth trying. At one point, Blaze looked to her left for Silver only for a pile of snow to suddenly sweep over her and bury her alive. Her flames were still flickering though and Blaze managed to fight her way to the top again thanks to the flames around her body. Blaze gasped for breath and pushed through the snow, relieved to have made it out again and she resumed her fruitless search for Silver. The avalanche carried her halfway down the mountain and continued to cascade to the bottom where a blanket of snow awaited her. Blaze ignored the sheer height of the fall she'd be taking for she was only focused on finding Silver although right about now, she was

beginning to lose hope of finding him in this enormous pile of sweeping suddenly, Blaze spotted Silver being swept away by the snow, his head barely above the surface and his body appearing unconscious. Blaze ploughed through the snow with her flames making the perfect snowplough and she trudged over to Silver, straining from the heavy piles of snow all around her. Blaze could feel herself getting exhausted, most of her energy being used to make her fire that made such an efficient snowplough and trying to get to Silver. But Blaze fought back and she used whatever energy she had in her to reach Silver. She grabbed him and she lifted his head up above the snow, hoping to get him some air. Blaze held on tightly to Silver as the avalanche carried them far down the mountainside and she fought hard to keep herself above surface. Her hard work ended up paying off in the end for the avalanche began to slow down at last and Blaze could feel it coming to a stop as it completed its fall. The last piles of snow slid down the slopes of the avalanche before finally coming to a stop at the bottom of the mountain with Blaze emerging from the snow with Silver's unconscious body. She was relieved that the avalanche had finally stopped and now that she was safe for the moment, she rested Silver's body on the ground and knelt beside him. She felt his chest in hopes of feeling his heartbeat. It felt pretty weak. Blaze began to fear the worst. Had Silver perished in the avalanche? Blaze was determined to wake him up, she couldn't lose her boyfriend so soon after declaring she loved him. Blaze shook Silver slightly, her hands on his shoulders and shaking him in hopes of reviving him.

"Silver? Silver? Please…please wake up. You're gonna make it Silver, I know you will. Please wake up!" begged Blaze between shakes.

Silver did not come to. He wasn't even breathing. Blaze put her hands to her mouth in despair. It wasn't often Blaze was brought to crying but in this case, she could feel the tears getting ready to trickle down her face. Blaze took her hands off her mouth and she shook Silver again.

"Silver! Oh god please don't be dead!" she wailed "Please, PLEASE wake up! Silver?! SILVER?!"

She was practically screaming at him to wake up right now but it

didn't seem that was going to happen. Sometimes when somebody falls unconscious it can take a while to revive them but Blaze wasn't very patient, another flaw of hers that she would have to deal with some day. Thus, Blaze immediately began to assume the worst. She had no idea if Silver was just taking a while to come to or was actually, really dead but it seemed to her he was dead. Blaze stopped fighting back the tears and she allowed them to trickle down her cheeks like raindrops on a window. She wrapped her arms around Silver and hugged him, hoping that would by some miracle revive him.

"Oh no…no, no, no! Silver, please don't die!" howled Blaze "Don't die on me please! I love you…" she whispered to him between snivels.

After that, Blaze just broke down in tears. She hugged Silver like he was some oversized teddy bear and she cried over him. What had started off as a lovely birthday for her and now become a day of tragedy. She had lost her best friend who had just recently become her boyfriend. They had confessed their love for each other at last… and now their flower of love wouldn't blossom anymore. Blaze would be left on her own to fulfil Silver's dream but it wouldn't be the same without him. Even if the future changed and Mobius didn't end, Blaze wouldn't consider it worth living in without Silver. The most wonderful thing in her life had been taken away from her and it would take a long time for Blaze to get over it. Then suddenly, after a minute of crying over Silver, something amazing happened. Silver began to come to at last! If Blaze had waited for a minute instead of assuming the worst immediately, she would have realized that Silver was still alive. Silver opened his eyes and he turned his head to see Blaze weeping for some reason. He put a hand on her head and lightly stroked it.

"Blaze…?" he whispered hoarsely, his voice pretty weak for he was still waking up "Why…why are you crying?"

"You're dead Silver!" wailed Blaze, not realizing that Silver was alive and just assumed she was hearing his voice in her head "You're dead and I'm never gonna see you again!"

"No…cough, cough…I'm alive Blaze." croaked Silver "Look."

Blaze lifted her head up and she could see that Silver's eyes were open, he was awake and he smiling rather weakly at her. He looked a little bedraggled but he was alive at least. Blaze's tears quickly became tears of joy and her face broken into a relieved smile.

"SILVER!" she squealed delightedly "Oh thank god! I thought I'd lost you!"

She wrapped her arms around his neck and shoulders and nuzzled against him warmly, happy he was alive and content to feel him hugging her back. Silver smiled happily as he stroked Blaze's back and head with delight.

"I thought I was gone too…" he croaked "But I guess you managed to save me."

"I think I did too." said Blaze "I managed to get your head above the snow on the avalanche's last few yards and I think that managed to save you. If I hadn't gotten to you in time…you would be dead!"

"I would indeed." said Silver "So…thank you for saving my life Blaze."

"Anything for you Silver." said Blaze happily, echoing the words that Silver had said to her after helping her get across the crevasse "I couldn't live without you Silver. You're more special to me than anything in the world."

"Aw thanks." said Silver "And you Blaze make my life complete. My life wouldn't be the same if you weren't in it."

Grateful for the compliment, Blaze grasped Silver's shoulders and she pulled herself into a loving kiss with the silver hedgehog. Silver returned the kiss, enjoying this lovely moment with his beloved Blaze. As they kissed, Silver still couldn't help but feel lucky that he had managed to land the Princess of the FireCatKingdom herself, even if she refused to be acknowledged as such due to having no kingdom to rule over. What would his father have thought to this? He might have been very proud to see his son in love with such a brave, strong-willed, powerful woman like Blaze. He felt very lucky that he had managed to win her heart. Silver and Blaze broke up the kiss

and Blaze helped Silver back up onto his feet.

"Now then, let's get out of here before that freak Blizzard decides to attack again." said Blaze.

"I agree, I can't bear to be here any longer as long as she's on the loose." said Silver "Plus, we have to warn Sonic about the time rift and Blizzard's evil plans. Mind you, the time rift's more important so I think we should warn him about that really."

"I agree." said Blaze "Take us away Silver." she added, putting her arms around Silver.

Silver activated his psychic powers and both his and Blaze's bodies were surrounded by a teal glow that shone brightly around them. Blaze held on tightly to Silver as the silver hedgehog took off into the air and he flew off into the distance, heading for New Mobotropolis and keen to get as far away from White Acropolis as possible. As they left though, they failed to notice that another time rift had opened up above White Acropolis and as they cleared the place, the time rift began to expand as if hoping to swallow up the whole mountains. The time rift was definitely getting worse and now an infinite crisis was about to begin. Worse still, nobody would be able to stop it and more than just Mobius Prime was going to be effected by this crisis…the Crisis on Infinite Mobiuses was just beginning and nobody would be able to stop it…

Silver and Blaze may have survived that close encounter with Blizzard but believe me, they haven't seen ANYTHING yet! This arc maybe over but it's just beginning...Tune back into **Heroes of Mobius** ***where "Crisis on Infinite Mobiuses" finally begins... It's a crisis that you cannot miss and it will be Sonic's biggest adventure ever so don't miss it!***

Becoming A Spy 1

Arc 23: Becoming A Spy

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 180 & 181

Part 1: Shaping the Spy

A few days had passed since the attempted assassination of the Royal Fighter super spy Sora Prower.*

Dr. Finitevus had sent Scourge the Hedgehog and Fiona Fox to kill Sora in fear that Sora would eventually come to spy on him and find out what he was secretly planning and then expose it to the Royal Fighters. Ruben the Water Panther, who had recently become her boyfriend, had managed to defeat the two thanks to a power ring that had made him more powerful and gave him the strength to take down Scourge and Fiona. The resulting fight had left Ruben injured and badly beaten but he was alive and recovering quite well. He had received quite a few "Get Well" cards from the Royal Fighters Service and his team but the "Get Well" card he loved the most of course was the one he'd gotten from Sora herself. It was blue just like he was and decorated with patterns of water and ocean waves. In the card she had written:

To my darling Ruben,

Love you dearly and I'm missing you loads while you're in hospital and I'm still on duty. Hope you get better soon cute stuff!

Loving you loads, Sora Prower XXXX

The card sat beside Ruben's bed and he would glance it often when thinking about his beloved girlfriend. He was madly in love with Sora after all. He had once fallen for Cosmo but after hearing she was interested in Tails, Ruben had not made any moves on Cosmo out of respect for Tails since he didn't believe in stealing somebody's

girlfriend**. Now that he'd found love in Sora, he wanted to love her for every minute of his life and treat her the way Tails treats his beloved Cosmo. He was just grateful that Sora loved him like he loved her. At the moment, Ruben was peacefully relaxing in his bed just doing nothing but listening to the sound of his own breathing and feeling his chest rise up and down as he breathed. Sora promised to come around and see him at five and he only had five more minutes to wait until she arrived. The five minutes passed by rather quickly. So quickly in fact that the knock that came from the other side of Ruben's door startled him slightly. He turned his head to his right and looked at the door.

"Come in." he said.

The door opened and in walked Sora Prower herself. The little vixen cub was of course grinning from ear to ear and looking very excited to see her boyfriend. Ruben's smile broadened at the sight of Sora. He could be suffering from depression and Sora would still be able to make him smile. Sora walked up to Ruben and sat down by his bed. She seemed to have had something behind her back but she sat it down behind her calves and lightly put a hand on Ruben's chest.

"Hello Ruben." she said brightly "How are you today?"

"Much better." said Ruben with a smile "Especially seeing you here precious. You know, the doctor's surprised at how fast I'm recovering. He says I might actually be allowed to leave tomorrow."

"Oh that's wonderful Ruben!" exclaimed Sora delightedly, hugging Ruben "That way you can resume your duty as a Royal Fighter and we won't be separated any longer!"

"Thanks dear." said Ruben "You know, I wonder if that power ring might have something to do with my accelerated healing progress?"

"Its possible." said Sora thoughtfully "If that is the case then I'm glad it's making you heel faster. I miss you while you're stuck in here."

"I miss you too Sora but you needn't miss me too terribly." said Ruben kindly "You know where I am and you're always free to visit

me like you are now."

"I know." said Sora with a nod "And by the way water boy, I got you a present."

She turned around and lifted up the thing she'd put down on the floor behind her. Ruben gasped in pleasant surprise. It was a water feature. Sora had purchased it on her way to the hospital and fought that given Ruben's love for water; it would make a perfect present for him. The water feature was made of stone and was sculpted into the shape of a meditating water panther dressed in robes. It seemed New Mobotropolis had some merchandise for Chun-Nan residents should any tourists or any Chun-Nan residents who come to live in the city come by. The water feature had a hole above the panther's head. It was clear the water would come out through the hole and trickle down the panther's body, starting with the head. Ruben took the water feature into his hands and he admired it.

"Aww Sora, its wonderful!" he cried "Thank you so much! This'll look amazing in my back garden."

"You're very welcome cute stuff." said Sora sweetly "I knew it would make a good present for you. All the pumps and hoses are back at your house though, I didn't want to drag them around with me as I brought the water feature for you. You can install it properly when you get out of hospital."

"That's very nice." said Ruben "I can hardly wait to see if it works. This is a very lovely gift Sora. But you didn't need to get me a gift, because the greatest gift I could ask for is already standing beside me." he added sweetly.

Sora smiled in awe and she and Ruben kissed each other. After a minute their lips separated and they were back to staring lovingly into each other's eyes.

"You know, you can lie down on the bed with me." said Ruben "There's enough room."

"OK then." said Sora.

Ruben shifted across slightly, making room for Sora. He put the water feature down beside the bed so it wouldn't be in his or Sora's way. Sora lay down beside Ruben, surprised at how comfortable the bed was as she lay back in it.

"Wow, this is comfy." she said "I bet you sleep very well at night in this."

"It's so comfortable I could sleep all day in it." laughed Ruben "But when you're my age, you don't feel sleepy that often."

"No, when you're a kid it's quite hard to just settle down given how excitable you can be." said Sora agreeably.

Ruben nodded and he turned over onto his side. Sora turned over onto her side so the two were now facing each other whilst lying on the bed. Ruben reached out and lightly touched Sora's cheek.

"You know Sora, there's one thing I would love to ask you." he said softly, stroking Sora's face with his fingers.

"Ask away Ruben, I'm all ears." she said with a smile.

"How did you become a spy?" Ruben asked "And what was it like learning how to become one?"

Sora stared at Ruben for a minute as if he'd just asked her something rhetorical like "Is the sky blue?"

"Oh…I didn't expect you to ask me that." said Sora slowly.

"If you don't want to answer, its fine." said Ruben "I was just asking."

"No honey, it's just fine." said Sora reassuringly "Because you're my boyfriend, I think you deserve to learn about my past life and my ascension from child to super spy. Only Tails knows the full details of my past and that's because he's my brother. Because I love you Ruben, I feel you deserve to hear the full story too."

"Well it's nice you trust me that much dear." said Ruben, touched to hear that Sora trusted him that much.

"You saved my life! How could I not trust you?" laughed Sora "Anyway, my story begins in the nice but lonely establishment known as Furville Orphanage. You see, I had to be given up at an early age because my parents couldn't afford to look after me AND Tails at the same time. I was only four at the time."

"That's dreadful! Having to be given up that early!" exclaimed Ruben.

"We had no choice." said Sora sadly "It was either "Keep both of us and starve or lose one of us and live". Because Tails needed mom and dad more than I did, I CHOSE to be given up. It broke my heart since I always wanted a brother but my love for him was so great that I didn't care. As long as he got the care and love he needed, I was all too happy to give myself up and become an orphan. Even if it ended up leaving Tails living eight years of his life not knowing who I am or the fact he had a sister."

"Well Sora, that was very heart-warming of you." said Ruben kindly "You have the biggest quality I adore in not just girls, but Mobians in general. A kind heart. Tails couldn't possibly ask for a more big-hearted sister."

"Thank you." said Sora in awe "Now then, we move on to two weeks after I was given up…the day I got adopted by a man who would change my life…"

Furville Orphanage, Furville, eight years ago…

Furville Orphanage was about as nice an orphanage as you could get as far as orphanages go. The building was three stories large with the entire third floor dedicated to just bedrooms for all the children, the second floor dedicated to fun and games and the bottom floor being where the living room, kitchen and office room was stationed. The building had a faintly vintage architecture, suggesting it had been around for a few decades longer than the surrounding buildings in the village. It still stood proudly as if it were new and had been quite a nice place for people to dump their children should they not want them anymore or feel like they can't

raise a child anymore. Orphanages were often associated with heartbreak and sometimes neglect but the atmosphere still remained happy, cheerful and optimistic. Adoption day was often the most exciting day for the orphans in the building for the orphans would hopefully get to have a family again and be happy and content to be in a family once again. Some days orphans got adopted, other days they wouldn't but at least somebody would get adopted one day. Some however had become teenagers and still hadn't been adopted so some orphans had lost hope of ever getting a family. One of the orphans in the orphanage was little Sora Prower. At four years old, Sora wore a different pair of shoes and gloves and had a cute little yellow bow in her hair. The heartbroken vixen was here because her parents could only afford to look after one child and they had all agreed Tails needed looking after more than Sora did. She was already four years old whereas Tails wasn't even a month old yet. It tore Sora apart to be separated from her brother, perhaps forever and ever since she'd ended up in the orphanage, she'd been very isolated. She never talked to anybody, she just sat on her bed and kept herself scarce. She was so isolated that she didn't even come down for meals. She had to have her meals brought up to her and even then, she was mostly too miserable to eat and often ate very little, if anything at all. The woman who ran the orphanage, who was a deer named Mrs. Doe, worried about poor Sora. Only four years old and the child seemed to be suffering a great depression. Being forcefully separated from her family must have been hard on her. But Sora was only four, she shouldn't have such an acute understanding of her situation. Most people of her age wouldn't really understand what was happening and likely get over developments like this sooner or later. But not Sora. It was clear the child had a mind like no other. Child prodigy perhaps? If Sora was this good at understanding at four years of age then just imagine how intelligent she would be when she got older! But it seemed Sora might not grow much since she was so isolated. Mrs. Doe had contemplated about whether she should force Sora to join in with the other orphans or not. Sora couldn't remain isolated forever but forcing her would like make it worse for her so leaving Sora alone might actually be better. But would Sora come to grips with herself and become more sociable? Or would she just stay like this forever? The other kids in the orphanage weren't sure what to do about Sora. Some thought she was a misery guts

and not worth their time whereas others pitied her and wanted to befriend her to which Sora would politely refuse and request to be left alone. Two weeks had passed and Sora hadn't changed a bit. She was still miserable and anti-sociable and still isolated herself in the bedroom while the other kids played. Mrs. Doe worried for poor Sora. If she carried on like this, she wouldn't ever get adopted and would likely live her life in the orphanage. Little did the deer realize was that that was about to change forever. As adoption day arrived and Mrs. Doe gathered the orphans for adoption, people came in and saw who they would like to adopt or whether they would like to adopt anybody. About fifteen kids got adopted that day, leaving twenty left in the orphanage. Sora had kept herself scarce and tried not to stand out since she didn't want to be adopted. She just wanted her parents to get enough money to be able to look after two kids again so they could get her back and she'd be reunited with her loving family. It seemed to work for nobody had noticed her. But it didn't keep up forever. There was one man left in the room and he appeared to be interested in adopting a child. Sora couldn't help but stare at how unusual the man looked. He was a Mobian Coyote and he was dressed very smartly as if he was off to a party. He wore a tuxedo with matching black tie and had a fake rose in his breast pocket. He had black trousers that matched the tuxedo and he had polished black shoes that gleamed in the light of the room. Sora swore she could see reflections of the orphanage ceiling in his shoes, they were that polished. His hair was neatly trimmed and slipped tightly back and he had a rather important look to him. His face showed no emotion and yet seemed to say that he was in some kind of business. Tough business perhaps. Was he some kind of business man? If so, why would he be interested in adopting a child? Surely he wouldn't have the time to look after one given how business like he appeared? Even at four years old, Sora knew she was looking at an unusual man. It was part of her character to have a keen idea on people just from reading body-language and facial appearances. She wasn't sure why she was so good at it, she just seemed to have this unusual talent that she couldn't explain. The coyote walked up to Mrs. Doe's desk and sat down before her. Mrs. Doe looked at the man and smiled cheerily.

"Hello sir, welcome to Furville Orphanage. How may I be of service?" she asked politely.

"Hello ma'am, I wish to adopt a child from this rather grand looking orphanage you run." said the coyote. If voices could have an appearance then it would look drier than even a bone. Sora wondered if the coyote knew what emotions were given how deadpan he sounded.

"Of course, that's why visitors come here." said Mrs. Doe with a slight chuckle "So then, why do you wish to adopt a child then? Do you desire children of your own?"

"You could say that." said the coyote casually.

Sora wasn't sure she liked the sound of that. He didn't give a straight answer, just a casual "You could say that". That made her suspicious. Sora shuffled to the back, hoping the coyote wouldn't notice her. But the coyote's eyes were sharp and meticulous. He could spot an ant crawling across the corner of the room from where he was sitting. He saw Sora moving and his eyes fixed on her as she moved to the back. It was hard to tell what would be going through the coyote's mind but you could say he already had thoughts of some sort about Sora. He was already interested in her.

"It appears you have a shy child." he said to Mrs. Doe "That lavender haired child's trying not to be seen."

Mrs. Doe knew who the coyote was talking about. Only Sora had lavender hair in the entire orphanage. Mrs. Doe turned around in her seat and called over to Sora.

"Sora dear, don't be shy." she said kindly "Please come forward."

Sora refused to move. A rather broad but chubby mole who was next to her rudely pushed her forward.

"The deer said come forward so do it brat-face!" growled the mole.

Sora stumbled forward and found herself now in the view of the coyote. Sora stood there with her feet pointing inwards and her hands behind her back. The coyote observed her, clearly interested in her.

"Hmm, who's this little girl then?" he asked.

"Oh this is Sora Prower." said Mrs. Doe "The poor dear's very lonely and isolated I'm afraid. Poor finance forced her parents to give her up since they couldn't look after two children and Sora seems uninterested and socializing with anybody. I'm not sure if you'd like her, she's very shut off from everybody. Heck, I don't even know what her personality's like, she's THAT isolated!" she exclaimed unusually loudly as if trying to make Sora feel guilty over her lack of social behaviour. She failed.

The coyote for some strange reason that Sora couldn't quite work out, seemed to be interested in her and Mrs. Doe's description of Sora seemed to fascinate him rather than deter him. What was this man? A very unusual one that's for sure. Sora couldn't quite read him like she could some people but she knew for certain that the coyote was one unusual Mobian and she didn't really like that. The coyote looked at Sora for a minute and then looked back at Mrs. Doe. His thoughts were racing so much that his brain must have its own race track for them. He appeared to be a man who made up his mind unusually quickly, no matter what kind of information he was given.

"She sounds just perfect for me." said the coyote dryly "I'll be all too happy to adopt little Sora."

Mrs. Doe stared at the coyote as if he'd just said something silly like "My mother's a tea towel and my father's a red hot stove". Her jaw dropped but not as far as all the other kids in the room. They seemed shocked, no, outright HORRIFIED at the fact this dry, bleak looking coyote wanted to adopt a girl who clearly had issues and depression plaguing her rather than them! Sora looked like she was going to faint. She didn't want the coyote to adopt her and yet he wanted to! Sora had to protest.

"No, I don't want that weird looking man adopting me!" cried Sora desperately "Don't let him adopt me!"

Mrs. Doe ignored Sora although she might have just not heard her given she was still shocked at the coyote's derision to adopt Sora. She regained her sense and spoke.

"You...want...to adopt...Sora?" gasped the deer, her voice sounding

very hoarse indeed.

"Isn't that what I just said ma'am?" said the coyote cheekily. It was the only thing close to an emotion that he'd expressed the whole time.

"Well...I sure hope you can make Sora happier than she has been here." said Mrs. Doe "Sora, this man is your new father now and I hope you and he have a lovely life together." she said sweetly. S

ora wasn't so sure if that would be the case. She thought she would loathe her life with this coyote. Now business was settled, the coyote took Sora by the hand and he walked out of the orphanage with Sora toddling reluctantly after him. As they left the orphanage, Sora swore she could hear the other kids actually moaning and whining over the fact she had gotten adopted and they hadn't. After all, why would anyone want to adopt somebody as miserable as Sora? It didn't seem fair to them. They were more worth adopting than her. Sora had a feeling that if any of those kids saw her now, they'd want to beat her up until she couldn't live anymore. As the coyote and Sora left the orphanage, the coyote led Sora over to a rather sleek and brightly polished hover car. The hover car looked like an old Rolls Royce model only with hover pads instead of wheels. The coyote opened the door and sat down in the back seat of the car. Sora sat beside him and fastened her seat belt. Sora could see that they weren't alone in the car. There was a rabbit in the driver's seat. He was brown-furred and had blonde hair between his long ears. His outfit consisted of a smart outfit like the coyote's only he had a red tie instead of a black one. The rabbit turned his head to face the coyote.

He noticed Sora sitting nervously next to the coyote in the back seat.

"Ah, found what you wanted have you Martin?" asked the rabbit.

"I did indeed Jerry." said the coyote "Take us back to M.S.I.U. headquarters please."

"Righty-o." said the rabbit, name Jerry apparently, stepping on the accelerator pedal and starting up the car.

Sora now knew what her adoptive father's name was. Martin it seemed. She wondered where Martin and Jerry were going. They had said M.S.I.U. headquarters. But what was M.S.I.U.? And what did the rabbit mean when he asked Martin "Found what you wanted"? There was something suspicious about these two men and Sora didn't feel very comfortable about it. The car started up and hovered away from the orphanage, zooming down the road and heading off to its destination. As the car sped down the road, Martin looked at Sora. He could tell that Sora looked curious and nervous. Like Sora, he was an expert at reading people's body language and facial features but he excelled at it more than Sora did for he had spent years doing it. Sora was only four. Martin decided to explain himself to Sora.

" I can see you're very curious little Sora so I think you should know what's going on my girl." said Martin, his voice carrying a hint of softness to it as if trying to sound kind.

"Wh-who a-are y-you and wh-why did y-you adopt me?" asked Sora nervously.

"Well Sora, I can answer those questions easily for you." said Martin kindly "I am Martin Sumdac and my driver is Jerry McHoppy. We work for the Mobian Spy and Intelligence Unit. M.S.I.U. for short. M.S.I.U. is a secret organization that is dedicated to espionage and infiltration work."

S ora looked confused and she turned her head to one side. Martin could tell Sora didn't understand so he made himself clearer.

"I am a spy Sora and I work for an organization that recruits spies." he explained.

"What's a spy?" asked Sora. She had never heard of one before although that might be because she was too young to have heard about a spy. After all, not many people learnt what a spy was at four years of age. "

A spy is a person who sneaks inside enemy territory and finds out secret information to help stop evil from taking over the world or committing heinous crimes that don't have the populace's best

interest." explained Martin "I was on the look out for possible new recruits for M.S.I.U. so I came to Furville Orphanage in hopes of adopting a child that I can train to be the next big spy. And that lucky girl is you Sora."

Sora wasn't sure whether to be happy or anxious about that. She had to admit she liked the idea of finding out secrets. It was a naughty habit she had when she lived with her parents. She'd often eavesdrop on her parents for no real reason and then use the information to her advantage. Her love of eavesdropping is how she found out she was going to be a sister before her parents even told her the news. Maybe she could learn more about the spy business and see if it was something she was interested in.

"You want to train me to be a spy?" asked Sora "Why did you pick me in particular?"

"You have potential to be a spy." explained Martin "I noticed how you didn't want to be seen as if hoping not to attract attention to yourself. That's a good trait in a spy. Also you seemed to be trying to read me as if hoping to work something out from my appearance and presentation. That's a good trait in a spy too. Yes Sora, you definitely have potential. How old are you?"

"Four." explained Sora.

"You're only four and you have two good qualities in a spy." said Martin, neither his voice or his face showing much surprise "That is quite amazing."

"Thank you." said Sora "You know, I loved to eavesdrop on my parents before I had to be given up. They couldn't have a single conversation without me listening to them. I know it's quite naughty but I found it quite funny to do."

Martin seemed genuinely interested in that piece of info.

"Hmm...that is interesting." he said "Looks like adopting you was a smart move for M.S.I.U. You'll make a fine spy indeed."

"You think so?" asked Sora, feeling flattered to hear this stone-faced

man complimenting her.

"I do indeed." said Martin with a smile, a warm and friendly smile that made Sora feel more relaxed around him "We will begin your training tomorrow morning. First, I'll get you settled into your new home once we arrive back at headquarters."

"OK." said Sora brightly "Say, since you adopted me...does that mean I can call you "dad"?" she asked.

Martin seemed to think for a moment before answering.

"Why yes, yes you can." said Martin "After all, I didn't just adopt you to make you a spy. You see, I'm quite a lonely man and I've always wanted a child of my own to care for and love dearly. And Sora, you are that child I've been looking for. I think you'll not just make a fine spy...but a lovely daughter too." he added kindly.

"That's very nice of you to say...dad." said Sora sweetly.

Martin seemed to beam, the smile looking very out of place given how Sora had been used to seeing him so stoic looking earlier. Maybe Martin would be much better than she thought he would be. She still missed her family but Martin would be a lovely father and she would get used to being with him as she lived with him...

Present Day...

"...and from then on, we came quite close together." Sora finished "I grew to love my foster father. Maybe more than my legitimate father although that was because I was his daughter for longer and thus, spent more time with him and got to know him more."

"That's very lovely Sora." said Ruben with a smile "Its nice how instead of assuming you'd hate your foster father you accepted him and let him raise you up since your actual parents didn't have the money to do so."

"Indeed, and to think Martin scared me a little when I first saw him." said Sora with a chuckle "Honestly, the scariest person to me is one

I can't read. If I can't read his face or his body then that frightens me because it makes the person more unpredictable and I HATE unpredictable. Makes the enemy harder to spy on and take down."

"I understand that easily precious." said Ruben, running his hand down gently down Sora's arm "Predictability is a good weapon for us to use against the enemy."

"You bet." said Sora "Though it helps if we are unpredictable and the enemy isn't. Sadly, Finitevus isn't like that. He's unpredictable. I remember how I saw him with Eggman four days ago and his face and body language suggested he wasn't too happy with Eggman so now I'm wondering if he's really all that loyal to him."

"I see." said Ruben "Did you tell the others about this?"

"Of course." said Sora with a nod "Any information you can find is important, even if what I'm thinking is just gut instinct. But we're digressing. My story's far from over." she suddenly realized.

"Oh right." said Ruben "So my love, what's next in your story?" he asked with his hand tenderly touching Sora's cheek. Sora touched Ruben's cheek in return.

"Next we go to my training session." said Sora "And let me tell you, I was dead excited to see what being a spy would be like. As a kid I was very excitable and loved to learn new things and discover new things too. I had no idea that training to be a spy would be so tough though."

"Same goes to my first training session." laughed Ruben "I had no idea learning kung-fu and ninjutsu would be so difficult myself. But we're not talking about my story, we're talking about yours so let's hear how your first training session went Sora."

"OK then but please don't laugh." said Sora sternly "It's quite humiliating to me."

"Sora, you were four years old at the time, you shouldn't be humiliated at any mistakes you made then." said Ruben kindly "It's customary for people your age to make mistakes."

"Indeed…OK I won't feel humiliated." said Sora "Anyway, it all started the next day after my first breakfast with my foster father…"

M.S.I.U. headquarters, Grand Metropolis, eight years ago…

No sooner had Martin and Jerry arrived back in M.S.I.U. headquarters, they had taken Sora inside and had given her the grand tour. Sora had to know the place from top to bottom since she would now be living in these headquarters. The little vixen had been astounded by the sheer size of M.S.I.U.'s headquarters. It looked ludicrously conspicuous for a spy organization's headquarters, the building itself being a large tower that stretched straight up from where it stood like a protruding spike waiting to impale the sky above. The windows were all dark blue, giving the building a rather dark yet graceful appearance that seemed to match the nature of the spy somewhat. To Sora's confusion, the tower didn't say M.S.I.U. on it. In fact, it said nothing at all. It was meant to be disguised as a skyscraper and skyscrapers generally didn't have names or logos of any sort on them. Anyone passing by would just assume this was another skyscraper populating the city of Grand Metropolis. That was why the headquarters was such a well-kept secret. Nobody knew what the skyscraper was really for since it didn't stand out from the vast jungle of skyscrapers, towers and office blocks that seemed to loom all around the city like trees in a forest. Concrete jungle is what Sora thought of the city being like. M.S.I.U.'s true quarters were on the very top floor of the building. Martin had said it was less conspicuous to be on the top floor than anywhere else and not many people tended to go all the way to the top floor. The top floor was eighty-nine storeys high and offered an amazing view of the city all around. Sora had been amazed at the view upon reaching the top floor and felt like she could stare at it forever. After getting a good look of the view, Martin had given Sora a tour of their base of operations. The top floor had many facilities that a spy would truly need and had a clever feature of hiding all its facilities at the simple touch of a button. Walls would rotate around and reveal racks of weapons and gadgets that a spy might use on a mission or two and even sections of the floor would swivel around and reveal some nifty feature or another. Martin showed Sora the

training room which was just a vast empty white void that seemed to suggest it was nothing much. Martin had told her that the room was capable of forming and shaping a training course for its new recruits and she would see for herself tomorrow. After the tour, the two had had dinner together to which Sora had enjoyed and Martin then showed Sora to her room. Her room was very cosy looking with a single bed that had a spongy mattress, crisp sheets and soft pillows. Her bedroom had its own toilet, shower and bath and some drawers for her to put her clothes at night. Sora liked her bedroom instantly and spent most of the evening making herself at home. However she soon found herself missing her former family again once there had been nothing else to distract her and she had ended up crying herself to sleep that first night. Martin had pitied Sora but decided not to interfere since he himself wasn't very good at heart-to-heart talks. He had no loved ones of his own, his excuse being "He didn't have time to find a girl due to his business" and didn't want to risk sounding heartless to his adopted daughter. He hoped Sora would cheer up and focus well on her training though; he didn't want her getting upset over her former family all the time. It would make training her very hard and would make him regret ever thinking of training poor Sora in the first place. She'd still make a lovely daughter for him though.

The next morning dawned bright and sunny and Sora had woken up feeling quite cheerful since she was looking forward to her first training session. After she had gotten dressed, she joined Martin at the breakfast table. He had prepared for himself and Sora a fresh bowl of fruit and peanut butter on toast with orange juice to drink. Sora had wolfed down her portions quite hungrily, much to the amusement of Martin. He had no idea a girl so young would have such a big appetite. After she'd drunken her juice, Sora decided to stir up a conversation with her new dad.

"How are you this morning daddy?" she asked.

"Very well dear." said Martin brightly "How are you Sora?"

"I slept very well thank you." said Sora politely "I'm looking forward to my first training session today. So what will I be doing for my first session?"

"Full details will be given in the white room." explained Martin "Now then Sora, tell me about yourself. You seem unusually bright for a four year old. You seem to be able to communicate very well and have a good understanding of the world and the events that happen."

"Well mummy reckons that I'm a child…um…proditgee…uh… prodidee…um how do you pronounce that word?" she asked embarrassedly.

"It's "prod-a-gee" Sora, your mother thinks you're a child prodigy." said Martin "And I believe her, you're a very bright girl it seems from the way you're speaking and behaving. Most people your age aren't as down to earth as you. Even I wasn't."

"Well I did seem good at reading whenever I had any books and I seemed to understand mummy and daddy whenever they talked to me and even seemed to understand how people talk." explained Sora "Also, I have this strange talent of being able to read people's faces and body language. Mummy thinks it's astounding that somebody my age can do that. I mean there was one time where mummy tried not to look sad but I could tell she was hiding her emotions because she was shaking a little and seemed unsure and uncomfortable. I read all that in just the way she acted and expressed with her face. I don't know how I did it…I just did." her face seemed to show that she was telling the truth and that even she wasn't sure how she was so clever despite her young age.

"I can see that." said Martin "You Sora are a gifted child and I think your talents will be very useful in the spy field. We'll train you bit by bit as you grow and when you reach about eleven or twelve, we might send you out on your first mission."

"Oh OK." said Sora, not questioning if that age seemed a bit too young for a spy since facts like that didn't register with her yet "Sounds very good so do we begin now?"

"If you want to precious, we can begin." said Martin "Follow me."

Sora got up to her feet eagerly and she followed Martin as he led her into the white room, the M.S.I.U. training room. Sora couldn't

help but wonder how many people learned how to become spies when they entered this room. Perhaps hundreds of spies, if not more had been tutored by Martin or Jerry in the white room. The two Mobians entered the white room and as Martin had expected, Jerry McHoppy was already in the room and waiting for them. The rabbit didn't seem very enthusiastic about this upcoming training course. He seemed unsure about training somebody as young as Sora. He wondered if training a four year old was a bit too much. But Martin was sure that Sora was gifted enough to be able to do well at the training. She had shown some potential of being a spy and he was going to put Sora's talents to good use. It was rare that children this gifted ever existed so when they do come around, you put their talents to good use before they can be wasted. Martin had heard of child prodigies who had ended up using their talents for terrible things due to not being brought up properly and having their talents exploited at the expense of others. As Martin and Sora entered the room, Jerry walked up to the two.

"I've picked a suitable first training course for the little girl." said Jerry "We can begin when you're ready."

"Thank you Jerry, Sora's quite eager to get started." said Martin with a small smile "It's quite remarkable really, I've never seen anybody so eager to start training before."

"That is remarkable." agreed Jerry "But still I don't think Sora's old enough to be trained yet. She's only four."

"She's only four and yet seems incredibly bright for her age." noted Martin "She'll be fine Jerry. Especially as we're not using the more… lethal courses for her."

Sora gulped at the sound of that. Would the courses get more lethal as she got older? She wasn't sure if she really liked the sound of that. It seemed they'd go easy on her just because she was a kid at least so she didn't have to worry now. Jerry seemed to nod grimly at Martin.

"I still think she's too young sir." he said wearily.

"We'll let Sora decide on that." said Martin, clearly having much faith

in the girl he'd only just adopted just yesterday "Are you ready to begin Sora?" he asked kindly.

"Um…I think so." said Sora, suddenly feeling nervous now.

"That's what I like to hear." said Martin brightly "Jerry, let's get the course set up."

Jerry nodded and he took a remote control out of his tuxedo breast pocket. He pointed it at the floor, much to the confusion of Sora but she soon realized that nobody points remotes at stuff for nothing in a place like this. Sora and Martin stepped to the side as two rows of tiles that stretched down the middle of the room suddenly began to change colour from white to blue and red. If the entire floor turned blue and red it would have been like standing on an oddly coloured chessboard. Sora thought the lights in the floor looked pretty and was tempted to touch them but Martin kept her firmly back. He looked at Sora and exposited to her on the task.

"OK Sora, this is what we mostly have beginners try out." he explained in a slow, instructional manner as if he'd rehearsed his lines before this day came "It's a simple game of hopscotch. You must hop across the floor, touching ONLY the blue tiles. This is to test how agile and well balanced you can be, those are compulsory to any spy in the business. Touch the red tiles and the ceiling gun turrets will come out and aim at you. Don't worry about being shot though, they have no bullets in them for they're fake guns and thus they can't shoot you. If you get the gun turrets pointing at you, you'll have to start again. If you think you can't do it and you've had enough, just say so."

"OK then daddy." said Sora "Please promise me that I won't get hurt."

"You won't Sora, I promise." said Martin kindly "Now show your new daddy what you can do." he added with a reassuring wink.

Sora hugged Martin for good luck and then she walked over to the start of the course. She stared at the long train of blue and red tiles. There were a lot of them and there was a long way to hop. Sora wasn't sure if she'd make it that far. But Sora didn't want to

disappoint Martin, especially since he was her new father. She hated disappointing her former parents so she didn't want to disappoint Martin. Then suddenly, Sora began thinking of her former parents and was about to cry over them again. She forced them out of her mind and focused on the task. She couldn't be distracted now. Taking a deep breath, Sora hopped onto the first blue square. It lit up a lighter blue colour as her foot touched it. Sora looked over to the next blue square, keeping her balance as she planned her next hop. Balancing on the balls of her feet, she sprang over onto the next blue square. Sora began to feel more confident now. She had played hopscotch a few times when she was three and this is what this was beginning to feel like now. Sora hopped onto the next blue square and then onto another and then onto another. Martin watched, impressed with Sora's progress. The child was truly a wonder child, just his luck to have been the one to adopt her he could only think. Unfortunately, Sora's luck ran out. Sora mistimed her next hop and she ended up landing awkwardly on the blue tile. She slipped to one side and landed back first, her body stretched over a blue and red tile both at once. The red tile glowed a blood red colour and vibrated behind Sora's head. The aforementioned gun turrets that Martin had warned her about descended from the ceiling and they pointed at Sora, ready to rip her to pieces with a few deadly bullet rounds. Sora had forgotten that the guns were fake and couldn't shoot and she curled into a ball of fear.

"ARGH! DADDY, HELP ME!" she screamed in terror.

"Sora, the guns are fake! They can't shoot you!" yelled Martin "Don't panic!"

Sora realized that Martin was telling the truth since the guns weren't shooting at her. She uncurled from a ball and sat up, clutching her heart. Jerry turned the course off and Martin walked over to Sora. The vixen was already in tears, worried she would be getting a severe lecturing from her foster father. She hated being shouted at, especially when her former father was the one doing the shouting. She threw herself into his arms and wailed into his tuxedo.

"Daddy I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I'm so, so sorry! Please don't shout at me!" she wailed uncontrollably "I didn't mean to mess up! I'm sorry, I'm sorry!"

"There, there Sora, don't cry." said Martin, hugging Sora tenderly and stroking her hair to comfort her "I'm not mad at you. I wasn't expecting you to succeed on your first try. The first time is always the hardest sweetheart. You did pretty well though, we just need more practice and then you'll be perfect. Also when you have a gun pointed at you, NEVER freeze and scream for help." he added sternly "That can get you killed in the real world. If somebody points a weapon at you, you run. Don't stand there and let them kill you. Do you understand?" he asked, his voice much softer this time.

"Sniff…OK daddy. I'm sorry I got upset and I'm sorry that I failed." snivelled Sora, wiping her eyes dry.

"It's OK Sora, nobody succeeds at something on their first try." said Martin softly. "That's why we practice; we practice to get perfect at our tasks. Also, from the way you acted I guess you don't like it when people shout at you, hence why you got so upset."

"Oh I don't. I really don't." whimpered Sora "It's scary and it hurts my ears."

"Well Sora you'll have to get used to being shouted at I'm afraid." said Martin firmly "When you're on a mission, you will have many people shouting at you and you'll have to get used to it or you won't succeed out there. As you get older, you'll get used to it though."

"I hope so." said Sora "I want to be a very good spy and make you proud daddy. I like making people proud."

"That's another good trait to have when you're a spy." said Martin "Determination to make others proud. Sora, you've made me proud already by displaying that."

"Oh…thank you." said Sora with a huge grin on her face.

"Any time precious. Now would you like to try the course again?" Martin asked.

"Yes daddy." said Sora with a nod.

Martin smiled. Despite his stone-faced appearance at the orphanage yesterday, Sora really got used to seeing him smile like that. He

looks so friendly and nice when he smiled. She wondered what emotions he emoted when he was on a mission though. She couldn't imagine him smiling very much at his enemies that's for sure. Sora toddled over to the start of the course and Jerry turned it back on so Sora could give it another go. Martin stood beside Jerry and waited for Sora to start again. Jerry leaned near Martin's ear.

"For somebody who has no time for a wife, you sure are good with children." he whispered.

"If you want to raise a child to be the next big spy, you have to be good with children." Martin whispered back "But Sora's more than just the next big spy…she's the daughter I always wanted. I really think I'm going to enjoy having her as my daughter."

"Sounds nice but don't get too attached to her." warned Jerry "You know what that can do to you if you do."

"I adopted Sora and offered to raise her as my own. It'd be heartless of me not to get attached to her." said Martin coldly "What kind of father would I be if I didn't form a strong bond with my adopted daughter?"

"Martin, you do realize that sentimentality is a weak factor in a spy?" said Jerry sternly "And I'm sure you don't want to be seen as weak do you?"

"If caring for a child I adopted to raise as my own is considered "weak" then we must live in a terrible world." muttered Martin "Jerry, we will not have anymore talk of this. It is up to me how I treat Sora and as we all know, a spy is to be treated with care and respect and be allowed to have some kind of attachment. Otherwise, they can get the wrong idea about themselves…"

Jerry nodded understandably. He didn't agree with Martin getting attached to Sora but at the same time he knew Martin had a point. Sora would not take kindly if she thought she was just being "used" in anyway and would then feel betrayed and possibly turn on them. Some spies that worked for M.S.I.U. had actually betrayed the organization due to the fact they felt like the trainers didn't care for them and that they were just being used for the organization's own

benefit and nobody else's. Martin did not want Sora to feel that way at all. His own daughter turning on him would truly be a terrible loss indeed. Sora needed to be loved and treated like a daughter and not just some "tool" for M.S.I.U. to use in its dangerous line of work otherwise she would grow up the wrong way and be moulded into something terrible. Martin and Jerry fell into silence as they watched Sora try the challenge again. Sora hopped across some blue squares again but after getting across five of them, she lost her balance again and her hand planted itself flat against the red square ahead of her as she held her hands out to save herself. The guns came out again but Sora remembered what she had been told earlier. She didn't freeze and cower, she instead ran away from the gun turrets and over to Martin. The gun turrets retracted back into the ceiling. Martin smiled at Sora.

"Very good dear." he said "You remembered to run this time."

"Thank you, but I still failed the course." said Sora disappointedly "I don't think I can do this challenge daddy. I'm very sorry but…"

"Sora, you're still young yet. You have plenty of time to improve." said Martin nicely "Your balance will improve the more times you try. You have to keep practicing. Let's give it one more try and then we'll try another challenge OK?"

"OK daddy." said Sora sweetly.

Sora ran back over to the challenge and was ready to start again. Martin watched as Sora gave it another try, already imagining how good Sora was going to be when she grew older. She'd be better than most adults by the time she was a teenager if she progressed well now. It was a long way off but Martin knew that Sora wouldn't take long to become a great spy…

Present Day…

"…that challenge was just a warm up and in a way, dad going easy on me because I was only four." Sora concluded with a single breath "The challenges got much harder after that as I grew older and

conquered the previous challenges with ease. And all because of the love and support my foster father gave me."

"That's a wonderful story Sora and Martin Sumdac sounds like a lovely man." said Ruben with a smile "You were very lucky to have been adopted by him."

"I know, thank you." said Sora in a flattered tone of voice "Martin was a very lovely man. He was a great mentor to me and I loved him like he was my father from the start. Sadly as time went by, I ended up forgetting about my former family, even Tails. I was so focused on my training and getting so accustomed to my new life that they just slipped my mind. And do remember I was four at the time and kids can lose memories of something very easily at that age. All it took was seeing Tails for the first time since childhood, him thinking he recognized me and a picture that I kept in a childhood possessions box to remind me that I was a "Prower" and not a "Sumdac"."

"I know, I was there when Tails walked up too you and wondered if he knew you." said Ruben softly "I never thought it would turn out that you and him were siblings."

"I bet you didn't." said Sora humouredly "I will say, I do feel kinda bad I did forget about my family. It feels like a mean-spirited stab at them for giving me up even tough it wasn't their fault…"

"Sora, you didn't forget about them on purpose did you?" noted Ruben "No you didn't. As you said earlier, people that young can easily forget about something and when you're as focused as you are, you don't really have time to think about other things. I'm sure life as a spy requires much thinking about training and the task at hand so you likely wouldn't have time to think of your former family."

"Maybe you're right." said Sora quietly "Thanks Ruben. You know how to make a girl feel better."

"My mother always told me that "If you really love somebody, you treat them in a way that shows you love them."." said Ruben "I love you so I'm treating you the way that shows I love you."

Sora just beamed and Ruben beamed back at her. The two were holding hands and looked about ready to kiss again. But Ruben had something to ask first.

"So what happens next in your story?" he asked.

Sora didn't answer. She instead looked at her left wrist, which had been buried under her body as she'd been lying on the bed. She had a watch on and Sora gasped as she saw the time.

"Oh my gosh! An hour's already passed?!" she shrieked "I said I'd be back at Royal HQ in an hour! I'm sorry Ruben, I have to go. Royal Fighters never rest for long after all."

"Please can we continue the story tomorrow?" asked Ruben.

"Sure cute stuff, I'll tell you more tomorrow when I come in again or if you come home tomorrow." said Sora "I'm glad you want to hear more of it by the way. Tomorrow, I'm going to tell you about my FIRST mission as a spy."

"That'll be very interesting to hear darling." said Ruben happily "Say you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow Ruben." said Sora with a grin.

The two gave a parting kiss before Sora got up from the bed and walked out of the room, leaving Ruben to watch his beautiful girlfriend leave him alone in the room to just lay back and relax in his bed. He hoped he would be allowed to leave tomorrow, he didn't want to wait too long to hear the rest of the story. He had a feeling he was going to learn some more interesting things about his beloved Sora as she told him more…

Footnotes:

We recently saw all that in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 180

**** All the way back in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius***

Story 49

Well now we get to see some back story from Sora Prower. How lovely. :D And it was certainly nice to learn about her foster father wasn't it?

Tune into Part 2 where we get to see Sora's first mission. You'll NEVER guess who the antagonists in the next chapter are...;)

Becoming A Spy 2

Arc 23: Becoming A Spy

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 180 & 181

Part 2: The First Mission

Tomorrow had come just as it always did and as usual, the Royal Fighters Service was busy with activity. When you're a band of freedom fighters fighting for the freedom of Mobius, your group will always be busy no matter what's going on.

Right at this moment, the Prower siblings Tails and Sora, were returning home from a mission in Megapolis. No sooner had the morning arrived and the Royal Fighters had gotten up and ready, Tails and Sora had headed off to the Egg Bunker to see what was going on and to see if they could find out where Eggman was building more of his Death Egg refuelling stations. Sora had spied on Eggman five days ago and found out that Eggman was planning to build an enormous ship known as "The Death Egg" and he was building refuelling stations for the vessel all over the world* so the ship would have a place to dock and refuel no matter where it was flying. The stations were of course, fake as Eggman had explained to Dr. Finitevus but the heroes were none-the-wiser. They were convinced these stations were real and that destroying them would be a good idea for it would be a boon to the Death Egg should it run out of fuel and have no station nearby to fly to. Sonic the Hedgehog, Queen Sally Acorn and Tails himself had already destroyed the first station while Ruben had been protecting Sora from Scourge and Fiona but the Royal Fighters didn't know where any of the other stations were being built so Tails and Sora had gone back to Megapolis to find out that information. Thanks to Sora's replacement utility belt that had the same amount of nifty gadgets as it had before, they had found out that there was a refuelling station in Soleanna being built and now they were returning to New Mobotropolis to deliver the news to the Royal Fighters. Tails held

Sora tightly by the hands as he flew over the landscape and headed back home to New Mobotropolis. Sora was enjoying herself. She loved being carried by Tails while he was flying, it was a lot of fun for her and she was having a good time. Tails and Sora arrived back home in record time and they walked over to Royal HQ, the headquarters of the Royal Fighters Service and a nice gathering place for the team.

"I can tell you something sis, Princess Elise won't like the fact Eggman's building a big ugly refuelling station on her territory." said Tails grimly "I heard about her from Silver and Blaze when they met her during the Martian invasion**. She doesn't take kindly to people invading her land."

"I'll bet." said Sora in agreement "It's not nice to have some fat moustachioed freak building a big hideous refuelling station of his own kind on your territory without your permission. Elise will be happy to see us when we come over to help her."

"She will indeed." said Tails "Silver and Blaze tell us she's a good fighter too. Judo champion apparently. They also told us she beat Marik the Martian up single-handedly. That I would have paid good money to see!" he chuckled as he envisioned the tiny, sadistic Martian getting floored by the Soleanna Princess.

"From what I've heard about Marik, I think I would too." laughed Sora "So now we know where one station's being built, where do you think the others are being built?"

"Dunno, guess we'll find out sooner or later." said Tails with a shrug "I hope we do soon. I wanna get rid of those stations before the Death Egg takes flight."

"I'd rather stop the Death Egg from so much as taking flight." muttered Sora "But I doubt Eggman will reveal where it's being built and even if he's building it in the Egg Bunker, he won't make it that easy to infiltrate. He'll guard that thing with his life if he has to."

Tails nodded agreeably.

"With the stations down, we'll have some kind of advantage over the

Death Egg when it takes flight." he said "And we've taken down big Eggman ships before such as his Egg Carrier*** so we'll take down the Death Egg easily."

"I hope so little brother." said Sora unsurely "I sure hope so…"

Sora couldn't help being doubtful. The Death Egg sounded imposing, mainly because it had the word "death" in it and anything with the word "death" in their name usually did end up being VERY imposing. Sora had had plenty of experience with things with the word "death" in their names what with being a spy and all. She recalled a time last year where she had to take down a "death ray" laser mounted on top of a hover tank that had enough power to blow up a skyscraper. As generic as the name was, it lived up to its name and it had been thanks to Sora that she had stopped it. So right now, the "Death Egg" made her feel nervous just thinking about it. Would that be a big machine of death like that tank she'd stopped last year? Sora really didn't want to find out. She wanted to find out where the Death Egg was being built and have it destroyed before it could see completion. But the likelihood of that happening was very small since Eggman was rather unpredictable at times and his tight security would make it difficult to find the time to find out such information. Regardless, it wouldn't be impossible to find out where the Death Egg was being built. But Sora soon ended up forgetting all about the Death Egg. Tails and Sora walked into Royal HQ and much to their surprise, Ruben the Water Panther was standing there with a big smile on his face.

"Hi Tails and Sora, it's good to see you two are home." said Ruben politely.

Sora's body acted before her brain could even tell it to do anything. She sprang forward and leapt into Ruben's arms. Ruben hugged Sora back while Tails just stood watching, clearly awed at the scene before him. He know Sora and Ruben were in love but he hadn't seen them acting lovey-dovey in person yet so this was something nice for him.

"Oh Ruben! It's so good to see you!" squealed Sora excitedly "I was hoping you'd be out of hospital by the time I got back!"

"And your wish was granted precious." said Ruben with a wink "The doctor says I've pretty much recovered now and I was free to go. I'm glad about that too, I've missed being on the battlefield with all of you. Especially you my darling Sora."

"Aww, thanks my darling Ruben." said Sora, kissing Ruben on the cheek after she'd said that. Ruben just beamed with delight.

"Aww, you two are wonderful together." said Tails with awe "Makes me think of my wonderful relationship with my adoring Cosmo. I'm so glad that my big sister's found love just like I have."

"Thanks little brother." said Sora brightly "And me and Ruben couldn't be happier that we're in love."

"I know." said Tails with a wink "Especially considering you two seemed quite fond of each other for a while now. It's nice you managed to confess your love for each other. It took me a while to tell Cosmo I loved her." he added as he thought back to when he finally told Cosmo he loved her.

"Indeed it did." said Ruben "Its funny how it took me and Sora less longer to reveal our love than you and Cosmo though. Oh well, it doesn't matter. So, what have you two been doing at this moment?" he asked.

"We went over to the Egg Bunker to see if we could find out where Eggman was building some more of his refuelling stations." explained Tails "We've already destroyed the one he was building in the Northern Border of Megapolis so we tried finding out where the others are being built. We've only managed to find out one location though and it's Soleanna. We were just about to brief the others on our recent findings."

"I see." said Ruben.

"Hey Tails, can you brief the Royal Fighters on what we've found out?" asked Sora "Me and Ruben would like some alone time if you don't mind."

"Oh OK." said Tails "You two have a nice moment together and I'll

let Sonic and the others know what we've just found out."

Tails ran off to the laboratory to tell the Royal Fighters about his and Sora's mission in Megapolis. The moment he left, Sora and Ruben went into the rest room and sat down on the sofa together. They were still holding hands as they sat down. They looked into each other's eyes lovingly as they sat together. As far as they were concerned, this would never get old for either of them.

"It's really great to have you out of hospital Ruben." purred Sora "I've really missed you while you've been hospitalized."

"I've missed you too Sora." said Ruben "But now I'm out of hospital, we're back together and we can let our love grow ever stronger as time goes by."

"Indeed we can sweetie." said Sora, batting her eyelashes "I never thought I'd find love so soon I really must say."

"I didn't think I would either honey." said Ruben with a smile "But I'm glad I did. Mother always told me how wonderful love is and being with you…I can say mother is right. Love is a wonderful thing indeed."

Sora nodded and the two kissed for a minute. After they'd broken up the kiss, Ruben decided to ask something.

"So Sora, where were we on your story?" he asked.

"Oh, the story! I almost forgot about that!" laughed Sora in half embarrassment "Ha, ha…ahem, I was going to tell you the story of my first mission Ruben."

"Oh yes. I can't wait to hear that." said Ruben, beaming with excitement "So come on dear, let's hear it."

"Please don't rush me Ruben." giggled Sora, playfully pushing Ruben back slightly "I'm going to get started. So, my first mission happened on a hot sunny day in July, 2141." she began "I had only just turned eleven at the time. My first mission happened immediately after my eleventh birthday. Dad thought I was ready to be a spy so he sent me out on my first mission. Ah I remember the

assignment as if it only happened yesterday…

Grand Metropolis, M.S.I.U. headquarters, two years ago…

Sora's training had progressed over the years and due to her prodigious learning abilities and sharp mind, she herself had progressed very nicely and was already becoming a rather skilled spy. As far as her foster father Martin Sumdac was concerned, Sora would already be a pro before she was even thirteen. She was only eleven now and was already matching skills with some of M.S.I.U.'s best agents in terms of abilities and skill levels. Martin had been amazed at how well his daughter had progressed over the years. He knew she was going to be good but he had no idea she would be THIS good. He began to think now was the perfect time for Sora to have her first mission. The two were having lunch together at this very minute. Sausages and bacon with fried eggs, a rack of toast and tinned tomatoes. This was Sora's most favourite meal in the entire world and the vixen showed how much she loved it by savouring every mouthful she had. Much different to the four-year old who wolfed everything down Martin had to say. Sora took a slice of toast and she dipped it into her egg yolk. The yolk burst into a yellow stream that spread over the egg as her toast penetrated it. The edge of the toast soaked up some of the yolk and Sora chomped happily onto the toast, her taste buds dancing with delight as the lovely taste of egg yolk mixed with toasted bread filled her mouth. Toast and egg were great on their own. Put them together and you get a double dose of great taste. Sora swallowed what was in her mouth and then proceeded to cut a piece of sausage and a piece of bacon with her knife. Spearing the two pieces on her fork, she popped them into their mouth and made a satisfied "Mmmm" as the two meats made her taste buds go wild. Sora liked to mix her food a bit when she ate for she thought it made meal times more interesting. Martin was quite pleased to see Sora enjoying her food so much. She certainly wasn't difficult to cook for. A few minutes later, the two had finished their lunch and Martin wiped his lips with his napkin.

"OK Sora, it's time we got down to business." said Martin, his face pretty much matching the phrase "get down to business".

"OK Daddy, what's going on then?" asked Sora politely.

"I've been very impressed with your training and how well you've progressed over the years." explained Martin "And being as you've just had your eleventh birthday yesterday, I think you're the right age to have your first mission. Some might say it's wrong to send a kid out to spy on people but those people forget that we train kids to be spies so Sora, I believe you are ready to have your first mission today."

Sora almost couldn't speak for a minute. She stared at Martin as if she'd just been told that the end of the world was coming. Her jaw just hung open like a cargo door on a plane opening up to let in the cargo it would be carrying.

"I imagine this must be surprising sweetheart." said Martin with a understanding nod "I hope you're not horrified by this…"

"Horrified? Daddy I'm THRILLED!" squealed Sora, leaping out of her chair and nearly landing on top of the table in ecstatic glee "Oh daddy I've been waiting forever for this day to come! Oh I'm so glad you think I'm ready! Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU!"

"Yes, yes dear, please calm down." said Martin hastily "Let's not lose our heads."

"Not a good thing to say before your daughter goes on her first mission dad!" moaned Sora as a nasty image of her head being separated from her body formed in her brain.

"I'm terribly sorry love, I agree. Poor choice of words." said Martin tightly.

Martin appeared to blush with embarrassment over saying that accidentally. Sora had never seen him blush before so this was amusing for her. Amusing to the point she had to stop herself from laughing at him. Martin gave a wry smile as he saw Sora gripping her lips together to stifle a laugh.

"Now then, here is your first mission." explained Martin.

He pressed a hidden button under the table, something that made

*Sora wonder how long it had been there since she'd never noticed it before, and a screen extended from the centre of the table like clothes emerging from a mangle****. The screen was quite long, extending four feet in height and width and it lit up with an ominous green glow that shone over Sora, almost making her look ill as she was bathed in the green glow. The screen then showed a Wanted poster and in the Wanted poster was a Mobian weasel. He was purple in colour and wore a brown fedora with a black band around the crown, brown gloves, brown and white boots that reached the knees and a brown belt clipped tightly around the waist. The most striking feature of the weasel was that he had an astonishingly large triangular tooth protruding from the upper part of his mouth. Sora cringed. The tooth looked hideous and even uncomfortable. Who'd want to be that weasel's dentist?! The weasel also had a pointed snout with a large black nose at the end, making him look sharp and sly. Sora immediately hated the weasel. He looked like a criminal. Martin read Sora's face and shared her disgust.*

"This heathen before you is the lowest of scum." he informed "This is Nack the Weasel but he nicknames himself "Fang the Sniper". He's a ruthless mercenary who kills for big money and will kill whoever he likes and shows no remorse for his actions. He's cunning, clever and very sneaky and he is an extremely good shot. He ALMOST never misses a shot. If he points a gun at you, you likely WILL get hit."

Sora gulped. This sounded a bit extreme for a first mission. Surely Fang the Sniper was too much for her? She remained silent as Martin continued.

"Fang has two accomplices, names Bean the Dynamite and Bark the Polar Bear." he exposited "They're extremely dangerous too. Bark's among the strongest Mobians on the planet and Bean is dangerous simply because he's a lunatic who flings bombs everywhere like a deranged maniac."

The screen showed pictures of Bean and Bark. Bean was a green feathered duck with two notoriously large bangs on his head and a yellow beak. He wore read shoes with white stripes and buckles on them and two green tail feathers. He wore white gloves and a red neckerchief. He looked goofy that much was certain but Sora knew

better than to laugh at this duck. Somebody who threw bombs at people was no laughing matter. Bark was a white-yellow polar bear who wore a red woolly hat, thick brown gloves, a green scarf and red and brown shoes. He had two bangs on his forehead and strands of hair down the sides and back of his head. He was incredibly muscular, looking very broad and imposing and like he could pack quite a punch. Sora thought he looked like a polar bear who was about to get into a boxing match. She imagined that be must be well out of his territory if he's wondering around a big city and not a polar icecap somewhere. Martin turned the screen off and it retracted back into the table.

"These three form "Team Hooligan" and they're the worst criminals in Grand Metropolis." said Martin grimly "Nobody has been able to catch them, probably because of Bean's bombing powers and Bark's abnormal strength but definitely because of Fang's intelligence and near-perfect accuracy in aiming and shooting. We have a plan on how to capture them though. We have a pair of control collars ready to put on Bean and Bark and we know what kind of cell to hold Fang in, a cell with no bars appropriately enough so he can't "weasel his way" out of the cell. The thing is, we don't know where he's hiding. We have some idea such as the Bottom of the Barrel Bar N' Grill but we can't just storm the place and assume Team Hooligan are there, that would cause unnecessary upsets and alert the team of our presence. We need to ambush him and catch them by surprise. And that Sora is where YOU come in. You will spy on the bar and see if the team really are there. If so then you will activate a tracking beacon and we'll know where to find you. It shouldn't be too dangerous my darling, all you have to do is find out where he is and then tell us."

"I hope so daddy, I think this mission might be my last already." said Sora nervously "Team Hooligan sound very dangerous. Are you sure I'm adequate for the mission?"

"I wouldn't send you on it if I didn't think you were adequate Sora." said Martin gently "But the most important thing is, do YOU think you're ready?"

That was a very good question and Sora had to think about it very carefully before giving Martin an answer. Did she think she was

ready for her first mission? She had been well-trained, well-educated and well-brought up by Martin Sumdac and his friends in M.S.I.U. but did that mean she was ready for her first mission? She was still young and was likely going to end up in a situation that would be too much for anybody her age to manage. But on the other hand, Martin hadn't given Sora anything too dangerous to do, just observe a bar and see if Team Hooligan are hiding there. She should be able to do that easily enough and Sora had studied enough in stealth and strategic manoeuvres to make sure she wouldn't be caught. Sora wanted to put her spy skills to use at last and she thought now would be a good chance to do that. She also wanted to make her father proud. Sora made her decision. She looked at Martin, the coyote smiling warmly at her as if hoping to encourage her in some way. Well that was sort of what Sora assumed the smile was about but she didn't mind. She loved it when Martin smiled like that.

"Daddy...I think I'm ready." said Sora quietly "I want to have a try at my first spy mission. I'm aware of the danger and I know what can go wrong. But I do think that I'm ready."

"If you think you're ready Sora then we can get you started." said Martin kindly "I have the perfect equipment for you to take on your first mission..."

He paused as he stood up from the table and walked off into the training room with Sora following him eagerly. She'd seen many of the gadgets and tools on display during her time in M.S.I.U. headquarters but never had she been allowed to use them for anything other than training before. A twinge of excitement gripped Sora's guts from inside as she felt herself tingling delightedly all over, feeling like she was going to go crazy with joy. Sora could hardly wait to see what gadget she was going to be given for the mission. In the training room, Sora noticed how Jerry McHoppy was already in there and seemingly training on how to be a good shot. He had a gun in his hand and was taking target practices. He shot at three targets with a single shot at each of them from his gun, which was a standard shot gun that was popular amongst spies and still as useful as ever. He shot the bullseye on each target without a single miss. Jerry was perceptibly good at shooting and Sora wondered if

he'd be able to beat Fang the Sniper in a gun match. Jerry looked over his shoulder and noticed Martin taking Sora over to the gadgets display in the wall.

"Good morning you two." he said politely "I take it Sora's getting ready for her first mission?"

"You're correct." said Martin "She's being a very brave girl right now and I couldn't be more proud of her for wanting to give it a shot."

"I still think she's too young sir. Give her two more years at the most, she'll be adequate then." said Jerry with concern evident in his voice.

"Sora has chosen herself to go on the mission and I see no reason to disrespect her choice Jerry." said Martin bluntly "Besides, all she has to do is spy on the Bottom of the Barrel Bar N' Grill and tell us if Team Hooligan are hiding there. Nothing too dangerous."

"I'm sure she'll manage that." replied Jerry, looking much happier now "Good luck on your first mission Sora." he added, stroking Sora's head in a friendly manner.

"Thanks Jerry." said Sora brightly.

Jerry smiled back. Martin led Sora over to the weapons and gadgets display wall and he picked off a silver utility belt that had various orbs slotted into sockets around the belt and a shoulder strap that went over the left shoulder. This was the utility belt that would later go on to be Sora's trademark. Martin handed Sora the belt. Sora looked at it unsurely, wondering what kind of weapon this would be. Martin could tell Sora was unsure about the belt so he told her everything she needed to know about it.

"It's a utility belt Sora. When I was your age, this was my weapon of choice." he said "The orbs have many different features and are gadgets in their own right. They are coded so you know which one is which."

He took all the orbs out of the belt and showed them to Sora one at once.

"This orb is a grappling hook orb." he said, showing Sora an orb that had "grappler" in tiny letters carved on the back "This orb can transform into a submarine." he showed Sora an orb that had the word "submarine" carved in tiny letters on the back "This orb contains a drill for digging." he showed Sora an orb that said the word "drill" on it and had a purple dot instead of a red dot like the others "This orb is a spy-cam and comes with a detachable ear piece." he demonstrated the feature like so by taking a piece off of the orb and sticking it in his ear and then putting it back on the orb "It'll record what it sees and hears. Very handy. And this orb is a camera orb that is useful for taking photos." He showed Sora the orb that said the word "Camera" on it "And now finally, it has an orb that when it explodes, it'll shower the enemy in Mega Muck. Very handy for a quick getaway." he said, showing Sora the orb that said "Mega Muck" on it "Mega Muck is very rare so you should only use this orb sparingly. Replacements aren't as easily to come across as that. It has other features such as a hidden pen knife and a spray canister that can be used to blind the enemy momentarily."

"Sounds very cool." said Sora with an excited grin on her face.

"It is indeed." agreed Martin "It's been a real-life saver for me when I used to use this belt. Of course, I've outgrown it so I now pass the belt on to you Sora, my darling daughter."

He put the orbs back on the belt and then helped Sora to put the belt on. It clipped neatly around her waist and the shoulder strap fitted perfectly around her shoulder. Sora was quite pleased to see how well the belt fitted. It was nice and snug and didn't squeeze too hard on her. Also she felt honoured that her foster father was entrusting her with the belt, the belt that he had himself used on missions when he was younger. It was the greatest honour Sora could receive. Sora hugged Martin gratefully.

"Oh thank you daddy." she whispered.

"Anytime my little angel." said Martin softly, hugging her back "Now before you go on your mission…"

He paused as he took something out of his pocket and he handed it to Sora. It was a small rectangular object that was as flat as a piece

of paper and had a red dot in the middle.

"This is your tracking beacon." he said "Activate it once you've confirmed that Team Hooligan are indeed hiding in the Bottom of the Barrel Bar N' Grill. Do you understand?"

"I do dad." said Sora "Wish me luck on this mission will you?"

"I don't believe in luck Sora." said Martin "But I do hope that all goes well for you. Be safe my girl and show me how much you've learnt over the years."

"I will." beamed Sora.

With that said, Jerry took Sora by the hand and led her out of the room and off to begin her first mission. Martin would remain on standby along with the other spies and once Sora gave the signal, he would rush into the bar and attack hopefully bringing an end to their criminal career. As Jerry and Sora left, Marin spoke into a communicator he had hidden on the collar of his tuxedo.

"M.S.I.U. units, this Martin Sumdac." he said "My daughter's going to find out if Team Hooligan are hiding where we suspect they are hiding. Take your positions and remain on standby until she gives me the signal. I'll let you know when she's done so."

He got a positive reply on the other side of his communicator. The plan was ready to commence. Team Hooligan wouldn't get away this time. That is, if they WERE in the Bar N' Grill like they suspected…

The bar itself wasn't a very long way away from the M.S.I.U. headquarters. Jerry had put Sora into the back of his hovering Rolls-Royce style car and had driven off to the Bottom of the Barrel Bar N' Grill and it had taken him about seven minutes of driving to get there. Upon arrival, Jerry dropped Sora off and immediately drove off and hid himself and the car in an alleyway so as not to attract any unwanted attention. Last thing he wanted was a thug coming nearby and getting any ideas about him and Sora. As Jerry hid himself,

Sora took a deep breath and walked into the bar. The bar itself was anything but attractive. It had wear in tear in many places, especially the doors and windows. There were window shutters that had either fallen off or were clinging onto the windows via the last set of hinges they had. The doors looked about ready to fall off too and Sora wondered if walking through them would be enough to do the trick. Sora was disappointed to see that the inside of the bar was even less attractive. It was an ugly, dingy sight inside with rotting tables that were still intact by some miracle or another, hundreds of ugly, brutish, violent looking thugs with bottles of wine, beer or whatever drink they had purchased and smoke polluting the atmosphere all around the bar from hundreds of smoking cigarettes clenched between the teeth of the customers. Sora held her nose as the horrible stench of nicotine stung her nostrils. Couldn't Team Hooligan have chosen a less smelly place to hang out in? She wafted the trailing smoke away with her hand as she toddled off towards a nearby table. She sat down on a chair and groaned as splinters began to prickle her bum. The chair was old and splintering everywhere. Sora wondered if the chair would just collapse without warning, it seemed so weak and wobbled so much. The nicotine-stenched smoke prickled her nose again and Sora coughed loudly.

"Phowar god this stinks!" she whined "Who'd want to hang out in a smelly place like this?!"

Suddenly, she was grabbed by the scruff of her neck and hoisted up from her chair by a rather muscular bulldog who had a very ugly face that was so ugly Sora wondered if his mother could even like that face. His biceps were big and bulging, making it seem impossible for his arms to articulate and yet by some miracle they still could. The bulldog growled, baring his yellow, nicotine stained teeth at Sora. The vixen was very frightened by the bulldog.

"Oy, no kids allowed!" snarled the bulldog "This 'ere is a bar and bars is for big strapping lads like me!"

"How do you know I'm a kid?" sneered Sora "I might be a very short adult. Have you heard of a dwarf before?" she added cheekily.

"Don't talk stupid with me you little maggot!" growled the bulldog "You're a kid and you're not allowed in this bar!"

"Says who?" scoffed Sora "I don't see a sign saying "No kids allowed" anywhere. Do you?" She knew that trying to be clever with a thug was suicide but Sora wasn't going to be bullied by some lowlife thug that easily. She was a girl who stood up for herself no matter what.

The bulldog barked fiercely at Sora and drew his arm back, ready to punch Sora's daylights out but Sora was ready for him. She whipped off the spray can on her utility belt and she sprayed it in the dog's eyes. The dog roared in pain as his eyes began to sting like crazy from the spray. He let go of Sora and clutched his eyes. This gave Sora the opportunity to run for her life. She ran out of the bar as the dog started growling and looking around for her. Sora dashed down the side of the bar and hid behind a row of dustbins, panting and gasping for breath as she heard a lot of shooting and growling from within the bar. If Team Hooligan were here then Sora wouldn't be surprised, it seemed just right for three criminals like them to hide in. Sora clutched her pounding heart as she tried to catch her breath.

"I am NOT going back in there!" she shrieked to herself "No way! Nah ah! I'd sooner dig my own grave than…"

Sora was interrupted by a peculiar sight. She peeked out from behind the dustbins and saw a polar bear in a woolly hat and scarf walking down the alley way towards her hiding place. Sora knew who it was instantly. It was Bark the Polar Bear, the muscle of Team Hooligan. Bark looked both ways as if making sure he wasn't being followed and that he was alone in the alley way. Then he walked on behind the Bottom of the Barrel Bar N' Grill. Sora emerged from her hiding place and crept slowly towards the corner of the bar. She peeked around and saw Bark enter through the back door. The back door seemed to led to a cellar of some kind for Bark walked down some steps that awaited him on the other side of the door. Sora sneaked up to the back door and silently followed Bark down the steps, keeping her distance as she watched him walk down. The steps went down quite far into the ground, at least a good few feet. Bark turned to his left at the end of the cellar and he opened another door and walked inside. Sora came to the bottom of the cellar and she opened the door a crack. She peeked inside with one eye and what she saw on the other side of the door was enough to make her

dance with excitement in her mind. The door led to another room which was presumably under the Bar N' Grill itself. It was likely a secret room, a room that even the bartender knew nothing about. There was nothing in this room but a table and three chairs and two of them were already occupied. One was being sat on by Bean the Dynamite and the other was being sat on by the head honcho himself, Fang the Sniper. Sora was amazed at how evil the weasel looked. He looked even more twisted in real life than on his picture. His enormous fang glistened in the light that hung above the table. Sora pressed the red dot on her tracking beacon. She'd found Team Hooligan at last! They WERE hiding in the Bar N' Grill just like Martin had suggested! But Sora was quite curious to see what they were up to so she wanted to stick around and listen in on their conversations. This was like when she eavesdropped on her former parents as a little toddler only she was eavesdropping on three evil criminals instead. She listened as Bark sat down and Fang began talking.

"Aaaah Bark me big muscular bear! What's it like outside right now?" the weasel asked in a growling, sneaky voice that just further enhanced his evil appearance and personality.

"Is it very noisy? Are there lots of people around? Do they have cookies?" Bean gibbered excitedly.

Bark didn't answer the questions. Bark was mute for reasons unknown although presumably it might have been because he was fed up of trying to speak over the talkative and noisy Bean so he kept quiet from now on. Bark's silence seemed to be the kind of answer Fang needed.

"Quiet is it?" he asked "Well then, I guess now's a good time to be robbin' that big jewel shop just a few blocks away from this bar. Hey Bark, how many guards are there in the shop?"

Bark held up four fingers. Fang burst out laughing hysterically, thumping the table and clutching his ribs as he laughed. Bean laughed too although he was more laughing because Fang was laughing than anything.

"Uh, why are we laughing?" he asked.

"The jewel shop only has FOUR guards?!" cried Fang "My gosh this is too easy! We can pick em' all off easily and then nab all the jewels for ourselves!"

"Jewel shop? Does that mean there's lots of shiny jewels I can steal?" asked Bean excitedly, grinning like a maniac.

"Yes Bean, there's lots of shiny jewels you can steal at the shop." sighed Fang. It seemed Bean's overly excitable nature irritated him to some degree.

"YIPPEEE! SHINY, SHINY, SHIIIIIIIINY!" squealed Bean, skipping around the room like a merry little child.

Sora could hardly keep herself from laughing. Bean was truly off his rocker. How could he be dangerous? Then she remembered the fact he could seemingly pull bombs out of nowhere and throw them at people. How could he do that? Magic perhaps? Sora had no idea. What she did now was that it was a good thing she'd managed to find Team Hooligan otherwise a jewel shop would be getting broken into right about now. Bean stopped skipping around the room and he sat back down, albeit still fidgeting crazily as if he was anxious to go.

"So can we go now? Please, please, please?!" he asked "The shinies can't wait for me, I must have my shinies now!"

"Calm down Bean, we'll get going shortly!" snapped Fang "Now then team, remember that those durn M.S.I.U. cretins are on the look out so make sure nobody's spyin' on us as we rob that shop! We don't want them getting' in the way of our raid. Other than that, it should be plain sailing for us today. When we enter the shop, I'll take out the guards with my excellent shooting skills while you and Bark grab all the jewels you can. I sure hope that H.U.N.T. don't try and get in the way again. Man those guys piss me off!"

"I'll say, kidnapping all those poor shinies for themselves when they're rightfully ours?!" said Bean in a voice that tried to sound angry but sounded more comical than anything "That's naughty! Those jewels are MINE! MIIIIIIIIINE! And H.U.N.T. can't have them!"

What's H.U.N.T.? *Sora thought to herself. Maybe that was*

something she could find out another day. It was certainly worth dropping a suggestion about it to Martin when the mission was over. She listened on as Fang continued his discussion.

"Bark, did you see anything that suggested H.U.N.T might be eyeing that shop while you was on patrol?" he asked.

Bark shook his head.

"Good." said Fang with a toothy grin on his face "Now then…"

He paused as he noticed that Bean was suddenly looking over his shoulder and staring at the door for some reason with his head to one side as if he was trying to work out what it was.

"Bean? Why do you look like a duck that's forgotten how to quack?" asked Fang curiously.

"Uh, I AM a duck and I HAVE forgotten how to quack you silly brain." murmured Bean without looking at Fang "I'm not sure if I'm a dimwit but, I think somebody's watching us. I think I can see somebody's eye through the crack of that door."

Sora's heart stopped. She'd been so careful! How did Bean spot her through the crack in the door?! Bean must have eagle eyes or something! Sora got up to her feet and she ran for her life. Fang, Bean and Bark were out of their chairs and over to the door before you cold say "Hey, somebody's watching us!" The door was yanked open and Fang just caught sight of Sora running up the stairs as fast as she could. Fang, being a weasel, was quite a fast runner too. He ran up the stairs and caught up to Sora just as she ran out through the door. He whipped out a revolver and fired a warning shot at Sora. The shot missed Sora for it was supposed to be a warning shot of course but Sora dived down to avoid it anyway. Big mistake for it allowed Bean and Bark to catch up to her. Just as Sora got up onto her feet, Bark seized her by the arms and held her aloft by them. Sora squirmed in the grasp of the enormous polar bear. Bark held on tight. He had a grip more powerful than crushing claws. It was impossible to get free from him.

"Nggh, ugh, let me go!" she yelled "Let me go right now!"

Bark ignored Sora and carried her over to Fang. Fang pointed his revolver at Sora's head and pulled back the hammer, readying the shot that he would fire at Sora with his revolver. Sora gulped and began to sweat with panic. Her first mission and she blew it already! She shouldn't have stayed and listened, she should have left the moment she'd activated the tracking beacon! That way she wouldn't be in this mess right now! M.S.I.U. would probably arrive in time to save her but would they do so? Would they be too late? Fang glowered at Sora, his face contorting with hatred. Bean seemed less hostile towards her.

"Oooh lookie what we got-a here!" he cried out delightedly "It's a cute little fox cub! Can we keep her?"

"Who are you, you filthy little brat?!" snarled Fang "Were you spying on us just now?!"

"P-p-please…f-forgive m-me." stammered Sora "I-I'm s-sorry a-about this. I-I w-was j-just trying to f-find the b-b-bar. I-I w-wondered i-if y-you c-could h-help me find it."

"Then why did you run away when Bean spotted you?" Fang growled menacingly "You were spying on me, admit it!"

"Hey, she's got something shiny on her belt!" cried Bean.

Fang saw the tracking beacon glowing on Sora's belt. The device's red dot as illuminated, meaning it was working. Sora began to sweat even more now, she was surely dead meat now Fang knew she had a tracking beacon on her. Fang glared even harder at Sora.

"You're wearing a tracking beacon!" he screamed furiously "You're trying to lure somebody straight to us! How dare you!"

"No please, you're mistaken!" protested Sora "I'm not spying on you! Honest! Please don't kill me!"

"I see no reason why I shouldn't." purred Fang dangerously "You're spying on me and you're wearing a tracking beacon! That's all the excuses I need to kill you! Bark, put her down!"

Bark obliged and he put Sora down onto the ground, Fang still

pointing his gun at her head. Sora shook nervously. She was going to receive a bullet to the head. What a brilliant start to her spy career! First mission and already she gets killed! Where were M.S.I.U. when you needed them?! Sora closed her eyes and waited for Fang to finish her off. Fang curled his finger around the trigger of his revolver but before he could pull it, a gunshot was heard and Fang suddenly screamed in pain. He clutched his arm as blood started to ooze out of a fresh bullet wound that had appeared on his upper arm mysteriously. Sora knew what that meant. The cavalry was here at last. Martin Sumdac stood there with a shot gun in his hand, smoke trailing out of the barrel after the shot it had spat out at Fang's arm. He had a cold expression on his face as he marched towards Team Hooligan.

"Don't you dare try to kill my daughter!" he snarled viciously.

"DAD!" screamed Sora excitedly "You're just in time!"

"I can see that." said Martin coldly "You were just about to take a bullet to the head Sora. Team Hooligan, M.S.I.U. have this place surrounded. You're busted and you can either come quietly or die trying to get away."

"You'll never take me alive!" roared Fang.

He held up his revolver and before Martin could shoot him, Fang fired three bullets into his chest rapidly and with perfect aim too. Martin staggered backwards in agony as three bullet wounds appeared on his chest and began seeping with blood. He coughed and then fell onto his back. He put his hand over the wounds and wheezed as if trying to breathe only he was having trouble due to the wounds in his chest. Sora put her hands to her mouth in horror.

"DADDY!" she shrieked.

She ran over to Martin's side and knelt beside him. Tears were already pouring down her face as she held Martin's head up with her hands and stared into his dying eyes. Fang pointed his revolver at Sora but just as he was about to shoot her again, the rest of M.S.I.U. suddenly stormed onto the scene with guns in their hands all pointing at Team Hooligan. Fang put his hands up instantly and so

did Bean and Bark. Bean however summoned a bomb from nowhere and he was about to throw it at the spies but an M.S.I.U. unit threw the control collar at Bean. The control collar clamped around his neck and Bean fell onto his knees, his bomb suddenly disappearing. He couldn't summon anymore thanks to the bomb and he gagged as if the collar was choking him.

"Hey, you ruined my bomb!" he whined "How could you, you savages?! He was going to make a terrific bang and cause lots of malicious destruction that would have been awesome to see!"

The M.S.I.U. units all moved in to arrest Team Hooligan. They snapped the cuffs on the three criminals and Bark was fitted with a control collar so he couldn't try and use his infamous strength to break free. The defeated criminals were then taken away down the alley way with Jerry following them. Jerry noticed that Martin was in a critical condition and he knelt down beside the dying spy as Sora wept over him. He was horrified to see that Martin was on death's doorstep and pretty much just waiting for the door to open and let him in.

"Oh my god! Martin's been shot!" cried Jerry.

"We've got to get him back to base!" wailed Sora "He's dying! We've gotta save him!"

"Sora…" whispered Martin weakly "It's…too late for…that…my wounds…are too great. I cannot…make it."

"No! No daddy please don't die!" whimpered Sora "You're gonna make it! I know you are! Please hold on daddy! PLEASE!"

Martin reached up with his hand and he lightly touched his crying daughter's cheek which was wet with tears. Sora could feel his hand lightly touching her. It felt so cold all of the sudden as if the warmth was draining out of it. He really was on the verge of death.

"My time…is up…" he croaked "Sora…you must…continue without me…I'm sorry…but there's nothing…we can do about it…"

"NOOOO!" howled Sora "Daddy you can't die, you just can't! Please

don't die! I can't lose you! Please!"

"Sora…promise me…this…" Martin croaked, stroking Sora's cheek tenderly "Promise…that you will…continue to…be a good…spy. Remember…what I've…taught you…and continue…to make M.S.I.U. proud. Promise…me that…"

"I promise, I promise!" blustered Sora "I'll continue training and I'll be a great spy dad! I promise!"

"That's my girl…" said Martin with a feeble smile "And Sora…just know that…I will always love…you…my…darling…daughter…"

"I love you too daddy." sobbed Sora "I'll always hold you in my heart. Always."

Martin said nothing more. With the feeble smile still on his face, his head tilted backwards and his eyes rolled up into his head. Then they closed and his last breath escaped from his lungs. Martin was dead. Never to spy on another soul ever again. Sora cried even harder and she gripped her foster father's dead body tightly, never wanting to let him go for even a minute.

*"NNNNOOO

Present Day...

"…and that's how I lost my foster father." Sora finished, her eyes brimming with tears.

Ruben was gobsmacked at what he had been told. Sora's first ever mission had resulted in the death of Martin Sumdac, the man who raised and trained her to be a spy?! What did Sora do to deserve that?!

"Oh my gosh Sora!" blurted Ruben "That…that's terrible! Oh gosh Sora I'm so sorry to hear all that!"

"Don't be." said Sora tearfully "You wanted to know the story of my first mission so I told it you. I should have warned you that it would also tell how Martin died."

"It's OK sweetie, honest." said Ruben, pulling Sora close and hugging her warmly "Although I hope you don't still think it was your fault he died. You didn't know that was going to happen did you?"

"I still feel like it was my fault." said Sora sadly, wiping away a tear "I shouldn't have eavesdropped on them, I should have left the bar once I'd activated the tracking beacon! But I didn't! I did something very stupid and I lost my surrogate dad because of my stupid mistake! It was all my fault he died and I'll never forgive myself!"

She then threw her arms around Ruben and hugged him tightly as she wailed into his shoulder. Ruben stroked the back of Sora's head softly and let her cry for a minute, rocking back and forth gently as Sora wept.

"Sora please don't be like that." he said quietly "It wasn't your fault Martin died…"

"YES IT WAS!" screamed Sora, startling Ruben and making him jump in his seat "Don't you dare tell me it wasn't! You're just trying to make me feel better! I made that critical error and it cost him his life! His death was MY fault and you can't tell me otherwise! Every night since his death, I would cry myself to sleep and have nightmares

about his final moments. It was horrible Ruben, it really was!" she wailed again.

"I'm sure it was sweetheart." said Ruben affectionately "Even to this day I still grieve over my late clan so I understand what you're going through."

"Thank you." said Sora, wiping away her tears "I'm glad you understand what I'm going through."

"Anytime Sora." said Ruben softly "We're both alike you an I. We've lost someone very important to ourselves so maybe that's why we're such a good couple."

"I know." said Sora agreeably "You know because of Martin's death…that's why I was so scared when it looked like you was going to die. I was getting horrible flashbacks to Martin's death and I was frightened that I was going to lose you too."

She put her hands on Ruben's shoulders and looked affectionately into Ruben's eyes.

"I love you Ruben and I don't want to lose you like I lost my foster father." she said "So I'm going to be quite protective of you."

"That's…that's very nice." said Ruben, touched by Sora's kind words "I'm so glad to hear that. I don't want to lose you either precious. You mean everything to me and I can't bear to lose you like I lost my clan. So like you, I'm going to be quite protective of you Sora."

"You're so wonderful." said Sora with awe "Thank you for being so wonderful Ruben."

"And thank you for being so wonderful yourself." said Ruben brightly.

The two then leaned forward to kiss each other again. Their lips locked and their eyes closed. They embraced each other warmly as they kissed, enjoying the lovely moment between them. It wouldn't last for they'd soon be going on a mission to Soleanna but at this moment, they were having the time of their lives and they were enjoying every minute of it. Up in the heavens, Martin watched down

with a smile as he saw how much Sora had grown up. Ruben's mother, the Bride of the Gentle Waves watched with him, pleased that Ruben had found love. The two parents may not be with their children anymore but as they watched from the heavens, they couldn't possibly be more proud of their respective children. They'd found love and that was the greatest honour either parent could receive from Ruben and Sora…

Footnotes:

See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 180

****See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 133***

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius Story 144***

****** A "mangle" is the British name for a "wringer"**

Aww...what a cute ending. ^^

Well that's the end of Sora's story. Hope you enjoyed learning more about Tails's big sister in this great two-parter. :D

Next time on Tales from Mobius, Dark Cat and Kiara are taking the spotlight as they have to fight "The Terror of the Cyber Huskies"...until then, tune back into Heroes of Mobius for the start of a new saga which sees Soleanna in its darkest hour...

Terror of the Cyber-Husky 1

Arc 24: Terror of the Cyber-Husky

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 184 & 185

Part 1: Abducted Dark

"Ready Kiara?" asked Dark Cat the Leo-Lynx as he drew out his trademark arm blades and positioned himself in a parry ready position.

"With you Dark, I'm ALWAYS ready." crooned Kiara, raising her broadsword and preparing to do battle with her beloved Dark.

Dark was pleased to see that his girlfriend was ready for this training session that he'd decided to have with her on this fine day in Megapolis. He criss-crossed his blades and held his arms in front of his face.

"OK then babe, if you're ready then we'll begin." Dark finished with a soft inhale and exhale as he prepared to attack "Lunge at me!"

Kiara complied with his order and she lunged forwards with her broadsword. Dark blocked the blow with his still criss-crossed blades held in front of him. The swords made a terrific clang as metal and metal made sharp contact with each other in the resulting attack.

It had only been a day since the Day of Solaris and things had already returned to the way they were and pretty much forgotten about the terrible day itself. Dark and Kiara had seen the world turn dark and distorted for a while during Solaris's terrifying attempt to end the world and it had put them both an edge until the day had been saved by Sonic the Hedgehog, Silver the Hedgehog and Blaze the Cat.* Queen Sally Acorn had informed all the Royal Fighter groups on what had happened and they were all pleased to see that Solaris had been stopped and that they were now going to try and stop Eggman for good. For now, Dark and Kiara were having a

training session. Kiara had been wanting to train more for she felt that she needed to learn more and become a stronger person and also she just wanted an excuse to spend time with her boyfriend. She loved Dark very much and would spend time with him in anyway possible. Dark appreciated Kiara's love for him very much for it made him love her even more and he was all too happy to train his beloved girlfriend. Kiara pressed hard on the hilt of her broadsword, applying pressure onto the blade and pushing down on Dark's very own blades. Dark was surprised at how strong Kiara was. She'd clearly trained before for her upper body strength seemed pretty good. Dark drew his blades across Kiara's blade, making a loud squealing "shhhhrrrrring!" sound as the metals scraped across each other. He threw his arms to the side and swung his left arm at Kiara. Kiara blocked the blow with her sword and swung it up, taking Dark's arm up with it and throwing him off balance. Kiara then took the opportunity to kick Dark in the gut while he was over-balanced. Dark fell flat onto the ground after that kick and just had time to roll over and get back up as Kiara lunged at him in an attempt to pin him down and keep him at bay with her sword. Dark sheathed his blades and he grabbed Kiara's wrists. He wrestled with the cheetah and tried to yank the sword out of Kiara's grasp. Kiara held on tight and bared her teeth as her boyfriend tried to relive her of her weapon. Kiara stomped on Dark's foot but the leo-lynx withheld his pain and rammed her in the shoulder in retaliation. Kiara rammed him back but Dark took the attack and he head-butted Kiara in the side of her face, not too hard though for he didn't want to cause too much damage to the cheetah. Kiara winced but gritted her teeth to withhold her pain. She was dazed slightly and that was enough for Dark to snatch the sword out of her grasp. Dark tripped Kiara up with a roundhouse kick to the legs and he pointed the sword at Kiara's chest. Kiara put her hands up nervously.

"D-Dark! P-please! Th-this is a bit extreme isn't it?" she whimpered.

"There will be a moment in a battle where this will happen baby." said Dark grimly "And now you have to work out how to get out of a situation like this. You know I won't kill you obviously but if somebody's pointing a sword at you, they won't hesitate to run you through. Even in situations like this, you look for a way out. Don't just get scared or surrender immediately. Use your brains and work

out how to turn over the battle in your favour."

"You mean like this?" said Kiara with a mischievous smirk.

She then proceeded to swing her leg up and drive it directly into Dark's groin. The leo-lynx straightened up in shock and his face curled into a twisted amalgamation of shock, pain and utter discomfort. He looked very funny to say the least and for a moment, he couldn't do anything as pain flared through his groin and his lower body. Kiara rolled out of Dark's way and she watched as Dark fell onto his knees and clutched his groin in pain. She'd never seen him look so pained in all her life. She did admit that she probably overdid it a bit and should have been a bit softer on Dark but Dark had told her to try what she can to get out of a situation of certain death like right now. Dark clutched his groin and made grunting noises that sounded like he was trying as hard as he could not to start violently swearing all of the sudden. He gasped for breath as he got tired of holding it in and he looked at Kiara furiously.

"Kiara…that was a cheap shot!" he whined, speaking through his teeth as he tried to hold in his pain still.

"Oh I'm sorry, I thought you said I had to do whatever I could to get out of a tight situation such as this." sneered Kiara "I only did what you told me to."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever." muttered Dark, standing up and ignoring the fading pain in his groin "Good use of tactics Kiara."

Kiara beamed with pride, pleased to hear Dark say that to her.

"So shall we continue or do you think this is enough for now?" asked Kiara.

"I think I need to let my groin recover." laughed Dark "So we'll call it a day for now. You've done quite well Kiara, you managed to show some surprising strength and you defeated me without using your weapon. Well done baby."

"Aw shucks Dark, you're just being nice because I'm your girlfriend." said Kiara in awe.

"Even if you weren't my girlfriend Kiara I still would have said that." chuckled Dark, giving Kiara a playful noogie-noogie on the head.

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't do that! You'll mess up my hair!" giggled Kiara frantically, trying to get free from Dark as he held on tight and vigorously rubbed his knuckles into her scalp.

"You kicked my groin so you get your hair messed up in return!" laughed Dark in a faux evil tone of voice.

He did let Kiara go though and Kiara rubbed her head better. Kiara looked back at Dark and she smiled at him.

"You know Dark, life's been wonderful ever since you joined the team." she said sweetly, putting her hands on his broad, muscular chest "It's been so great to have a fighter as cool as you joining our ranks and you've been wonderful company for me. I guess I really needed somebody like you in my life since there was nobody in the Megapolis Royal Fighters I could really talk to or get on with."

"Well that's lovely to hear sweetheart." said Dark, stroking Kiara's cheek tenderly with a gentle, loving hand "As for you, you're literally the biggest improvement in my life after what happened to me. My old life was terrible and meeting you was the best thing that's ever happened."

"Aww…that's so cute of you to say handsome."

Kiara could hardly help but be touched by such lovely words that Dark had said to her.

"I'm only saying what's true Kiara." said Dark softly "Without you in my life, it would still be horrible like it used to be."

The two embraced and kissed each other in the silence that followed that sentence. Their embrace was warm and full of love and their kiss was sweet, tender and wonderful. Neither of them wanted it to end as they broke it up after a moment.

"I'm so glad you think that." said Kiara with a heartfelt smile on her beautiful, attractive face "About your past, you still don't wanna talk about it right?"

"Yep. I still don't wanna talk about it." said Dark sadly "It's horrible. You don't want to hear it."

"OK then, don't talk about it baby." said Kiara softly "I'm sorry I asked. Please forgive me."

"It's fine sweetie, really." said Dark with a smile "You're just curious that's all and when you're in a relationship, you tend to be curious about your partner's past."

"You got that right." said Kiara "Anyway, let's forget about it now. I bet Thomas will be pleased to hear how we've progressed lately."

"He will indeed." said Dark brightly.

Thomas Tiger was the Field Marshal of the Royal Fighters Service and was the leader of the Megapolis Royal Fighters. He was currently away for the moment and Dark and Kiara were on their own in the Royal Fighter Camp that they occupied. They were pleased about this for they had planned on having a date together in Dark's tent and now they were on their own, they could have their date and not have any interruptions from the other team members. Kiara fingered Dark's hair and smiled lovingly at him.

"So Dark, you ready for our date yet?" asked Kiara eagerly.

"I am indeed Kiara." said Dark happily "I'll just get my tent set up for the date and then we can begin."

"I'll get the picnic basket while you're at it Dark." offered Kiara.

"OK then." said Dark "I'll let you know when you can come in with it."

Their date was just going to be a moment between the two of them in Dark's tent whilst having a nice picnic. They had already packed it ready for the date earlier this morning and Kiara had stored it in the portable fridge that the Megapolis Royal Fighters had on them to keep food chilled and cool. The fridge itself was attached to a generator so they could use it without need to plug it in anywhere. Kiara scampered off to the portable fridge while Dark went inside his tent and prepared it for the date. He didn't have to do an awful lot. His tent was quite roomy and had a lot of space for him and Kiara.

His sleeping bag resided in the back of the tent but he wouldn't need that now. He set down a couple of cushions on the floor for him and Kiara to sit down on and lay down a blanket for the picnic basket to sit on. He spread it out neatly on the floor and added a finishing touch. Unbeknownst to Kiara, he'd bought a vase of flowers for her and he'd hidden it under his sleeping bag, which was rolled up like a Swiss Roll and was sitting on top of the vase. Dark took out the vase and settled it in the middle of the blanket. He poured in some water to freshen the flowers up. The flowers were blooming and had a rich, glorious scent that made Dark's nose go wild with joy.

"Aaah, such a lovely smell. Kiara will love these." said Dark brightly to himself.

Satisfied that the tent was ready for them, Dark called out to Kiara.

"Kiara! You can come in now!" he yelled.

"OK Dark! Be with you in a sec!" Kiara called back.

That had Dark feeling quite puzzled for a minute. It surely didn't take this long to get a picnic basket. Did Kiara have a surprise of her own for him? Dark was sure interested now. He sat back and waited for a minute until he saw Kiara's silhouette standing outside of the tent. He noticed her shape looked a little different. Change in outfit perhaps?

"Come out for a minute Dark, I've got a surprise for you." said Kiara sweetly.

Dark emerged from inside his tent and was met with a surprising but lovely sight. Kiara had changed her outfit. She was wearing a light blue mini-dress with no straps that came down to above her knees. There was a black band around the waist. Kiara had also styled her hair into a ponytail which Dark had to admit, looked very cute on her. She was holding the picnic basket in her hands, meaning she'd not only changed her outfit but she did go and get the basket too. Dark couldn't speak for a minute; only stare at how adorable Kiara looked in that dress. Kiara posed for Dark.

"Like what you see darling?" Kiara asked teasingly.

"Kiara, I didn't think you could possibly get any cuter." Dark said with a smile on his face that was so wide you'd think he'd turned into the Cheshire Cat "You look lovely. That dress suits you and your hair looks nice in a ponytail."

"Thank you sweetie." said Kiara with a blush on her cheeks "I wanted to look nice just for you my love."

"You certainly succeeded, that much is certain." purred Dark seductively.

"Glad to hear it." said Kiara delightedly.

Dark let Kiara inside his tent. The cheetah walked inside and sat down on one of the cushions that lay neatly on one side of the picnic blanket that was occupying the space between the two felines. Kiara settled down the picnic basket near the vase of flowers and upon doing so, noticed the vase.

"Aw, those flowers look lovely." she cooed delightedly "They add a nice scent and colour to the scene I think. Did you buy these yourself Dark?"

"I sure did. I went into the local city and to a florist to get a vase of flowers for you Kiara." said Dark, shifting the vase towards Kiara "A girl as sweet as you deserves a gift as sweet as this I think."

Kiara put her hands over her chest as if taking the whole saying "You just touched my heart" very literally.

"Aww Dark…I don't know what to say." a very heartfelt Kiara could only say as she picked up the vase and beamed happily at the lovely gift.

"Your smile says it all dear." said Dark kindly "No need to say anything about it."

Kiara settled the vase back down on the picnic blanket and she crawled towards Dark on her hands and knees. Dark just laughed for he thought Kiara looked a little funny doing that. She put her hands on Dark's shoulders and leaned towards Dark, her lips nearly brushing against his own. Dark could feel his face heating up as

Kiara prepared to kiss him.

"You're so wonderful do you know that?" asked Kiara sweetly.

"I can say the same to you Kiara." Dark purred back.

Smiling, the two locked lips with each other and kissed once again. As they kissed, Kiara pushed Dark down onto his back, startling the leo-lynx for a moment but in a good way as he found himself lying on the floor with Kiara on top of him. He held Kiara tightly close to his body and kissed her passionately. He ran his fingers through the cheetah's lovely blonde hair as they kissed, Kiara enjoying the feeling of Dark's tender fingers through her hair very much. Dark had to wonder how Kiara managed to keep her hair looking so lovely as he stroked it tenderly. She must look after it very well he thought. Kiara ran a hand down Dark's chest, feeling his chest fur as she did so. The chest fur really did compliment his appearance in the cheetah's mind and Kiara loved to feel it. As the two kissed, their tails reached out for one another like a pair of hands reaching out to touch one another. Their tails curled around, forming a link between the two cats as if to say "love keeps us tied". After a minute, Dark and Kiara stopped kissing but they didn't keep their gaze off each other at all as their lips separated.

"Man I could do this forever." whispered Kiara softly.

"I could do the same baby." said Dark with a purr, fingering a lock of Kiara's hair and brushing it to the side.

The two were about to kiss again but a low grumble in the pit of Kiara's stomach interrupted them. Kiara blushed and giggled as she rose off of Dark and rubbed her tummy.

"Oh dear, I think my belly's telling me it's food time." she laughed, still blushing as if embarrassed her stomach had decided to start talking just while she and Dark were having a moment together.

"I was enjoying myself so much that I forget we were in here to have lunch together." chuckled Dark, sitting up and smooth his chest fur "Come on, let's eat before we start wasting away."

Kiara laughed and she opened up the picnic basket. She emptied the basket of all its contents and lay them out on the blanket for her and Dark to see. They had packed a plentiful stash of food in the basket. There was a couple of bread rolls that had been filled with cheese slices and a leaf of lettuce, a packet of tortilla chips and some flavoured dips for them to share, a pork pie to split between them and two sticks of celery. There was a muffin each for after the meal but Dark and Kiara left those in the basket for the time being. They started on the bread rolls. Dark and Kiara picked up their bread rolls and tucked into them, enjoying the rich taste of the cheese and the light crunchy texture of the lettuce mixed with the soft bread that contained them. As far as sandwiches went, cheese and lettuce was Kiara's favourite mixture to have in a sandwich. Dark had to admit that cheese and lettuce tasted nice together too. After finishing their bread rolls, they had the pork pie next. After cutting it in two, Dark and Kiara munched away on the pie eagerly. Both of them adored pork pie and were keen to savour the taste for as long as they could, the mixture of pastry and pig meat making their taste buds dance wildly with delight. They enjoyed the pork pie so much that it took them a few of minutes before they finally finished it off. They then started on the tortilla chips and dips. Kiara took a tortilla chip and dipped it in a bowl of cheese and chive dip. She didn't eat it though, she held it in front of Dark's face in offering. Dark gratefully opened his mouth and allowed the tortilla chip to enter the open portal as Kiara held it towards him. Dark ate the chip, enjoying the taste of the dip Kiara had dipped it in, and he picked out a chip of his own. He dipped it into some guacamole dip and held it in front of Kiara's face. Kiara opened her mouth and accepted the chip. She was surprised at the taste of the guacamole. Despite its green appearance, it tasted surprisingly nice. Some foods had a habit of looking unappetizing and yet tasting better than what their appearance suggested. Kiara swallowed what was in her mouth and reached for another chip. Between them, the two managed to finish off the whole bag. There was plenty of dip left over for next time they had tortilla chips much to their delight. They put the dips back in the basket for they wouldn't be needed anymore. Dark and Kiara then ate their celery sticks. After finishing them, they got out their muffins and prepared to eat them. Both of them had a chocolate muffin each and the lovely, sweet scent of the chocolate was making them all the more eager to eat them.

"It's been a lovely lunch I must say and what better way to finish it off with a lovely chocolate muffin?" said Kiara brightly.

"Chocolate's always the best ending to any meal." beamed Dark.

They were about to eat their muffins but just as the chocolaty deserts were brought to their mouths, a sudden noise made them both pause for a minute and the two Mobian felines put their muffins down. They were startled by the noise and for a moment, they didn't want to move. Dark's long, sensitive ears twitched, trying to make out the noise while Kiara held her breath. The noise was coming from outside the tent. It sounded like clanking metal. Eggman robots perhaps? Were they looking for people to roboticize at all? Dark was anxious to find out.

"What's that noise?" whispered Kiara.

"Sounds like somebody's prowling around outside." Dark whispered back "I'll see who or what it is. You stay there and keep quiet."

"What and sit out on you while you investigate something potentially deadly and threatening? No chance." muttered Kiara "I'm coming with you."

"You're staying where you are and that's the end of it." said Dark sternly "I don't want anything bad to happen to you."

"Oh yeah?" snorted Kiara "And do you not think for a minute that I don't want anything bad to happen to you? You're not leaving me outta this, I'm coming with you whether you like it or not Dark."

"If I recall Kiara, Thomas stated that you were to follow orders and not argue with the person giving them." said Dark sternly "Need I remind you what happened last time you disobeyed an order? You got caught by Team Diamond and nearly killed**. I don't want a repeat of that so for god's sake Kiara, do as you're told and stop arguing!" he shouted furiously.

"God, you sound like Thomas now!" ranted Kiara "He always thinks that I'm not capable of handling anything by myself and that I always need looking after! Why do you and him always act like I need

looking after?!"

Dark was getting fed up of this argument so he didn't say anything else. He simply crawled out of the tent and zipped it up from the outside, trapping Kiara inside the tent just so he could keep her there like he wanted to. Kiara was horrified to see her boyfriend do this to her. He actually straight up went and sealed her inside his own tent just to keep her from trying to help him? So much for teamwork was all Kiara could think in this situation. But Dark hadn't anticipated the fact that Kiara had a way out of the tent. She unsheathed a claw from the tip of her finger and proceeded to cut through the zipped up flaps of the tent. Once she'd done so, she peeked through the gap in the tent she'd made and watched as Dark patrolled the area, looking for the source of the metal clanking. He had all senses alert and was keeping an eye out for any trouble of any kind. Kiara couldn't see anyone other than Dark in the area. Maybe they'd been hearing things the whole time? But then the metal clanking was heard once again. Kiara held her breath and clasped a hand over her mouth as the noise grew louder. Eerily enough, the noise seemed to be coming from directly beside her. Kiara chanced a look to her right and was surprised to see a faint shadow on the wall of the tent. It was vaguely canine-like in shape with four legs, a head and a tail and the head seemed to have sharp teeth. The thing making the clanking noise was coming from outside the tent and it was standing directly beside the tent. Only a wall of silk and fabric separated Kiara from the metallic thing outside. Kiara wanted to warn Dark but she didn't dare risk catching the thing's attention. She could only sit and wait. She watched the shadow on the tent wall as it crept forward, clearly eyeing Dark and waiting to pounce on him. Kiara was desperate to warn Dark but she wasn't sure how to warn him without making the thing turn on her. Then she had an idea. She waited until the thing had advanced away from the side of the tent and closed towards Dark before she started flapping the tent's entrance wildly. Dark turned around and instantly saw the thing, standing just in front of the tent and glaring at him. It was a robotic dog-like creature with a silver colour scheme, a red visor that gave it an especially mean and fierce look and its metal jaws were crammed with triangular, metal teeth. Dark drew out his arm blades and readied himself for an inevitable fight.

"OK Robo-Dog-Thing-Whatever the hell you are, what are you doing here and who do you work for?" demanded Dark fiercely "Are you an Eggman robot?"

The robot dog didn't answer. Instead it pounced on Dark, snarling wildly with its jaws wide open as it lunged towards him. Dark swung his arm and cleaved the dog in two with his blade. The robot dog fell to pieces on the ground. Dark just sniffed at the remains, surprised at how easily killed the dog was. If it was an Eggman robot then he clearly needed to build something better. But Dark wouldn't have been so cocky had he realized that there was more than one robot dog. Two more suddenly appeared from behind nearby tents after hearing Dark slice their comrade to pieces and they scampered towards him like wolves chasing down an antelope. Dark turned around and lunged at the robot dogs with his blades. They hesitated and that little bit of hesitation was enough to save them from being slashed to pieces. Dark lunged at them again but the two dogs jumped back and avoided Dark's deadly blade. One pounced on Dark and started clawing at him, trying to bring him down to the ground. Dark grabbed the robot dog and yanked the dog off of himself. He threw it aside and spun around on his heel as the second dog pounced on him. Unfortunately for the dog, Dark had his blade raised up so the dog ended up impaling himself on Dark's blade. Dark could only laugh at the dog's spectacular fail As he swung his arm and threw the impaled robot dog off of his blade. The other robot dog was not at all pleased to see his comrade was dead and it rushed over towards Dark. Dark waited for it and just as the robot dog jumped into the air towards him, he swung his blade and cleaved the dog in two. The two halves hurled over Dark's shoulders and crashed to the ground in pieces. It didn't seem like there were any more robot dogs around. Dark had destroyed the only ones that were ever prowling around the camps ite. Only...there weren't just the three he'd already dealt with. Dark felt something wrap around his wrist and he turned around to see that it was another robot dog. It had extended a long metallic tongue out of its mouth and it had wrapped around Dark's wrist. Another robot dog appeared on Dark's other side and snagged his other wrist with its tongue. Dark pulled on the dog's tongues but the dogs dug their claws into the ground to hold firm. Dark pulled on their tongues, hoping to rip the tongues of of their mouths and free himself but the tongues were strong. Too

strong for him to break. He couldn't cut them for the tongues were holding his wrists and his arms were stretched taught by the dogs pulling on them. He couldn't manoeuvre his blades into the right position to slice the tongues in two. Kiara watched as Dark fought the grip of the robot dogs. She wanted to help Dark but at the same time, she was sure Dark could save himself. Then suddenly, the two robot dogs fired a jolt of electricity that coursed up their tongues and up towards his body. Dark screamed a blood-curdling scream of agony as electricity coursed through his body. He was brought down on his knees by the electrical attack and the dogs kept it up until eventually, he passed out from the shock. Kiara was petrified with shock. She couldn't move. She couldn't even breathe. Only stare in horror as her downed boyfriend was dragged away by the two dogs, their tongues still wrapped around his wrists. Then one dog released Dark's wrist and barked at seemingly nothing in particular. It was actually sending a message to its master. Its master seemed to get the message for a portal suddenly opened up from nowhere, startling Kiara and snapping her out of her petrified state. The robot dogs dragged the unconscious Dark through the portal and disappeared into thin air. The portal closed behind them, leaving no trace of its existence whatsoever. Kiara sat against the wall of the tent, scarcely able to breathe at what had happened. She almost wanted to cry but she was too afraid to even do that.

"No...no...Dark's been captured!" she whispered hoarsely to herself.

She felt angry with herself for not helping Dark when he needed it and he also felt angry at Dark for not letting her help him. Had he done so, he may have avoided this capture. But Kiara knew that anger wouldn't solve anything and she needed to take action. Whoever had kidnapped Dark obviously didn't have pleasant things in mind for him so she had to save Dark before anything could happen to him. Kiara got up to her feet and left Dark's tent. She ran into her own tent and quickly changed back into her normal outfit. She didn't want to go out into action in a skimpy little dress after all. After getting changed, Kiara slung on a scabbard over her back and grabbed the broadsword that she had been training with a moment ago. She sheathed it into the scabbard and set off to find her kidnapped boyfriend.

"I have no idea where those robo-dog-things have taken you Dark but I will find you, make no mistake on that." she muttered to herself "Nobody kidnaps my boyfriend and gets away with it! I'll find you and make the person who kidnapped you pay dearly for doing this..."

Kiara had that kind of streak running through her veins right now, the kind of streak where you'll do whatever it takes to save your loved one no matter the cost. And when Kiara had that streak, she was a force to be reckoned with and the kidnapper would be sorry he ever messed with her...

A little while later, Dark Cat finally woke up from his knock out and his eyes slowly but steadily began to open. The robot dogs had given him such a terrible shock that he'd been out for thirty minutes at most though to Dark it felt much longer than that. As he began to come around, he could hear some loud noises going on. One noise that stood out to him in particular was the sound of a circular saw churning through metal. The loud squeal of the saw had been the noise that finally woke Dark up and his ears winced in protest against the awful noise. He turned his head to one side and he could see that a big, muscular, yellow furred husky was churning pieces of metal off of a chunk of metal with a circular saw. He was clearly moulding something with the metal and needed to cut it down to size. Dark took in the appearance of the husky and was startled at his appearance. The husky wore a grey vest with a picture of a grenade on the front, a belt with pouches on either side, dark grey trousers and thick green boots with metal plating on the top of them. His lower arms were completely metal but the design made it look a little like he was wearing metal gloves rather than his lower arms actually being metal. On the wrist section of the metal arms was a bunch of red spheres and a couple of them could actually be pressed to activate some kind of feature, such as the portal that had brought the robot dogs back to him. He had a metal strip that ran from the base of his neck, ran over the top of his head and finished on his forehead. The forehead section of this apparatus had a red dot in the middle and Dark wasn't sure if it was a weapon of some kind or just decoration. His eyes were red too. Dark had a feeling he wouldn't like this husky and he decided to get out of here while he

could. Speaking of here, he was in nowhere in particular, just another part of Megapolis's ever expanding plains. He wasn't in the Royal Fighter camp though, he was in a different camp that was full to bursting with scrap metal, newly made metal and various different metallic parts such as metal arms, metal legs, metal head pieces, optics to replace eyes and much more. It was like some kind of metal producing camp only the husky was the only one running it and he had his robot dogs rushing to and fro to fetch any tools and metal pieces he needed. The husky obviously had intentions of making more people like himself given all the robot parts. Dark could already imagine the robot army the husky would likely unleash once he'd made them all. He knew he had to get out of this place before anything could happen. Only, Dark couldn't leave. He soon realized that he was restrained. He was lying upright and was fastened to a cross shaped structure. His arms and legs were stretched out, matching the X-shape of the cross he was fastened to. The restraints in question were heavy metal clamps that fastened tightly around his wrists and ankles, making it impossible for him to move whatsoever. Dark also realized that he had been stripped to the waist too. His rather well-toned torso was visible for anybody to see and Dark felt a little embarrassed that he had no shirt on. Only in Kiara's presence would he ever accept having no shirt on since Kiara liked to see him this way. Dark would certainly make the husky pay for restraining him and stripping him. He struggled in his binds and tried desperately to break free. The restraints were made of tungsten carbide, one of the strongest metals around. Dark had no chance of breaking out of cuffs like these. The husky didn't hear him struggle for the sound of the grinding saw blade was much too loud. If Dark could escape then he'd possibly get away unnoticed but the tungsten carbide cuffs held firm and refused to give away. Dark tried to activate his blades and break free but they wouldn't come out. Dark then realized that something was prickling his upper arms and he looked up to see that his upper arms had a syringe stuck in them. They were connected to a huge bottle that was fastened to the back of the cross and were continuously pumping some kind of liquid into his body. The liquid must be inhibiting his abilities for he couldn't draw his blades out. Sighing, Dark gave up and rested his head on his arm. He couldn't get away at all. He was trapped. Then suddenly, the husky stopped working and he put down the saw blade. He'd carved a curved piece of metal and was admiring his

handiwork. Dark looked at the husky and watched as he gave himself the thumbs up and he settled down the piece of metal. What he was making with it, Dark didn't care about, he just wanted to escape. The husky looked up at his prisoner and he smiled a nasty smile at Dark.

"Oh good, you're awake." he sneered "Now I have somebody to pontificate to."

He got up from his seat and he strode over to Dark. Dark just glowered at the husky, the look in his face a look of pure hatred as the husky approached him. The husky still smiled nastily at Dark as if he was pleased to have him as a captive.

"You know, I had no idea that my first new Cyber-Mobian would be a hybrid breed but I gotta say, you'll make a fine first addition to my planned army." said the husky, grabbing Dark by the face and squeezing it "Especially considering you're a skilled fighter and all. My Attack Dogs had a tough time with ya indeed kitty cat."

Dark was surprised at the grip the husky had on his face. There was no doubt about it, he was definitely a cyborg of some kind and his lower arms and hands were definitely robotic. The average Mobian wouldn't have a grip that tough. The husky let go of Dark's face and the leo-lynx stared angrily at him.

"Who are you and why have you done this to me?!" demanded Dark, looking at his cuffed up hands and feet "What do you want me for?!"

"It's not just you I want, I want any Mobian I can get my hands on." snorted the husky, jamming his face into Dark's and forcing his head backwards a little "Now time for introductions…" he took his face away from Dark and explained himself.

"I am Raphael the Cyber-Husky. I am the last of my kind sadly and I have a goal in mind."

"And what goal would that be then?" asked Dark "Something to do with all of these metal body parts you're making?" he glanced over at what Raphael had been doing a moment ago.

"Duh." snorted Raphael "What do you think I'm doing? Making props for a cheesy robot movie or something?" he motioned to all the robot parts around the camp as he said that.

"So what are you planning to do then?" Dark asked cautiously, somehow thinking he already knew the answer.

"Make a new army of cyborgs you moron!" grumbled Raphael, acting like Dark should already know what he's up to given he had pretty much told him what he was planning earlier upon mentioning Dark making a fine first addition to his army "Seriously cat-boy, use your head! I always said cats were dumb…" he muttered as if Dark's very presence was unsettling and revolting to him.

"I beg to differ." muttered Dark "So why do you want to make an army of cyborgs then?"

"Brace yourself kid for this will be long." said Raphael flatly "Ahem, as I said, I'm the last of the Cyber-Huskies. The Cyber-Huskies were a sub-species of husky that relished technology and craved nothing more than making themselves as technically advanced as possible. People like me too it further. We actually incorporated technology… onto ourselves."

Proudly showing off, he let Dark have a good look at his cybernetics. Dark just cringed, disgusted that somebody would willingly dissect themselves just to have pieces of metal and circuitry in their bodies.

"These metal arms make me a formidable foe." crowed Raphael "I can create portals, summon pods that transform into Attack Dogs and replace my hands with blades. This apparatus on my head emits sonic waves and believe me, you do NOT want to be the person I use it on. It's very unpleasant I can tell you that." he purred sinisterly, pointing to the head apparatus that was clearly the most favourite thing on his body for he showed great pride as he pointed at it.

"I can imagine." muttered Dark "So why are you the last of your kind then? What happened to the other Cyber-Huskies?"

"We were wiped out in our attempts to make everybody a cyborg,

that's what happened." muttered Raphael "Our technology was a little outdated when we carried out our ambitions for technology doesn't really evolve that quickly here in Megapolis. When we carried out our desire to make everybody like us, we were met with genocide. Many Cyber-Huskies were felled and even though guys like me upgraded ourselves with newer technology…we were too late to do anything about it. We'd already lost and we were an endangered species. The survivors sadly didn't last very long for the upgrades had some nasty side effects and their bodies didn't accustom well to the upgrades. I conducted some experiments to try and make my upgrades work and to eliminate the side effects. I was a success but unfortunately, I was too late to save the survivors. Thus…I'm the last of my kind. It's real sad I tell ya to think that there's no more Cyber-Huskies in the world and once I'm dead… we'll be extinct." he looked down on the ground and looked sad.

Despite being his captive, Dark felt a tiny bit of sympathy for Raphael. It had to be awful being the last of one's species and he could imagine how Raphael felt now.

"Well I'm sorry you're the last of your kind Raphael but don't you think you and your race kinda brought it upon yourselves?" asked Dark "I mean, why did you want to make every one a cyborg?"

Raphael looked at Dark with a grim look in his eyes.

"There's many benefits to being a cyborg kid." explained Raphael "I mean we can make ourselves stronger, more durable and give ourselves greater weapons and survive things that would normally kill us. And should we lose any limbs, we can replace them easy-peasy. I just don't understand why people wouldn't want to be a cyborg. Being part organic and part metal is the greatest thing in the world! We can improve our bodies and make ourselves stronger but we keep our minds and hearts so we're still ourselves in a way. You must see that my intentions are good little boy."

"Your intentions are reasonably good Raphael but did it occur to you for a minute that you shouldn't force people to embrace your way of life?" said Dark sternly "Couldn't you just let them pick their own way of life instead of forcing them to be what they didn't want to be?"

"Oh we tried telling people that being a cyborg is the next step in the circle of life kid but nobody wanted to so much as LOOK at us!" exclaimed Raphael angrily "They just dismissed us as freaks when actually, we're not! We're an example of what technology can do and the fact we need it to become stronger, better and likelier to survive! We had to take more extreme methods to make people listen to us! It pained us to do it since we didn't want to have to do something like that but we had no choice. Sometimes you have to be extreme to make your voice heard."

"The ends do not justify the means." said Dark with a grave shake of his head "Please understand that Raphael. All you've done is end up being the last of your kind. I don't want you to carry this on and get yourself killed. Let the Cyber-Husky's existence end on a good note and use your technology for something good. Please, it'll do you good and it'll make your life much better."

"Don't tell me what's good for me and what's not brat-face." muttered Raphael "You're just a dumb teenager, you don't know anything."

"I know plenty." said Dark seriously "I've been through a tough life myself but I eventually got out of it and made changes that improved my life for the better. You can do the same Raphael. I just ask of you to let me go and I'll help you in anyway possible."

"You're not going anywhere fur-ball." growled Raphael "You're going to be the first Mobian Cyborg and once I show you to the world, they'll be sorry they ever dared to think the Cyber-Huskies were freaks! They'll be begging to become cyborgs themselves once they see the improvements I've made to you!"

"More like they'll feel sorry for what you've done to me and be begging for your incarceration!" retorted Dark "There are people who are happy the way they are and I'm one of them! I wouldn't change a thing about my body and I certainly don't want to be a cyborg!"

"Tough crud cause that's what's gonna happen to you!" snarled Raphael, pinching Dark's belly and making him wince in pain "You can't do anything about it! Those needles in your arms are pumping you with a numbing serum that prevents the victim from using their powers so you can't use your blades to get free or anything! Before

you ask, the Attack Dogs showed me everything so I know what you can do and I've stopped you from doing it now."

"Once I get free Raphael, you'll wish you never got to see me with my blades out." snarled Dark.

"Not gonna happen anyway." sneered Raphael "Now be quiet while I get your parts ready. That's what I was doing until you woke up."

"You won't get away with this!" yelled Dark "Somebody's gonna discover what you're doing and they'll put a stop to it! Believe me!"

Raphael just activated his head harness and blasted Sonic with a tunnel of sonic waves that emitted from the red dot in the centre of his forehead and drifted towards Dark. Dark screamed in agony as the sonic waves hit him and due to the fact he was chained up, he couldn't move out of the way or try and fight the waves. Raphael just laughed as Dark wailed in agony and he kept it up until Dark eventually passed out again from the horrible pain the sonic waves were inflicting on him. His head flopped down and his eyes closed. Raphael just smirked at him.

"I warned ya about my sonic waves." he crowed "Now you're unconscious again, I'll just get working on your cybernetics. And you'll love them when I'm finished with them."

Before he did anything else though, he got out a U-shaped chunk of metal that was 4 centimetres thick and he shoved it in Dark's mouth. There were holes in the ends of the metal and Raphael got a screw and bolt to close the two ends around Dark's head so Dark wouldn't be able to spit the metal out or anything. He tightened the bolt until the metal pressed hard on Dark's face. He pulled on it to see if it would stay put. It wouldn't budge. Dark's mouth was now forced open and kept open by a metal U-shape and fastened firmly in place. This was Raphael's ideal way of gagging somebody. Pleased with himself, Raphael walked away from Dark and proceeded to continued with his work. He had taken all the measurements of Dark's body while he had been unconscious the first time and thus, he knew how big everything should be in order for it to fit Dark's body. He picked up the saw blade and started carving some more metal shapes. If Dark wasn't saved any moment now, he'd be on the

dissection table and ready to become a cyborg any moment now…

Meanwhile, Kiara was sprinting around the plains of Megapolis, looking for any sign of Dark and the robot dogs that had taken him. She'd been searching all the time Dark had been out and been talking with Raphael and she hadn't really come all that close to finding Dark. Megapolis was a big place, he could be anywhere as far as Kiara was concerned. Even worse, he might not even be IN Megapolis anymore. The portal taking the robot dogs home could have taken Dark anywhere on Mobius. Kiara decided to sit down and rest for a moment for her endless running was leaving her getting nowhere and fast and she needed to keep up her strength. As she sat down, she started grumbling to herself.

"Well Kiara, you're off to a good start aren't you?" she moaned "You're on a wild goose chase and you have no idea where the heck Dark is! How are you gonna save him if you don't know where he is?! The smart thing to do would have been to find out where Dark is and then rescue him, not run in blind and with no clue on where to go!"

She punched the ground in rage, and then ended up sucking on her sore fist as pain flared through her hand after the punch. Kiara shook her hand better and grumbled some more.

"I guess this is why not many people have that much faith in me as a fighter…because I'm such a stooge!" she whined "Anyone with a brain would have tried to deduce where your kidnapped friend is instead of just assuming you'll find him if you look hard enough! Ugh…I'm never going to be a good Royal Fighter if I keep acting like this. Someday soon I'll wise up and…"

Kiara froze as she heard the familiar clanking sound of the robot dogs coming from nowhere. Kiara got up to her feet and looked around, listening for where the sound was coming from. She wandered over to a tall, rocky cliff and peeked around the side of the cliff to see two robot dogs searching for something, presumably more Mobians to kidnap and bring to their master. They sniffed the ground and scanned the terrain for any signs of life. Kiara watched

them with baited breath, not daring to move or make a sound. She didn't want the robot dogs to get her as well. If she was caught than Dark had no chance of being rescued. The robot dogs searched around for another two minutes before one of them barked and the other nodded. Kiara had a feeling she knew what that meant. They'd obviously searched enough and were going to do something else. One of the robot dogs looked up at the sky and barked a couple of times. Kiara knew what was happening, they were requesting a portal home. Maybe that portal could lead Kiara to where Dark was being held! Holding her excitement, Kiara emerged from behind the cliff and ran over to the robot dogs just as a portal opened up out of thin air. The robot dogs were about to walk into the portal but they could hear the sound of rapid footsteps rushing towards them. They turned around and the last thing they saw was a blonde-haired, purple eyed cheetah lashing out at them with a huge, meaty broadsword and slicing them both to pieces. Kiara smirked at the remains of the dogs.

"Ha! That's what you metal morons get for kidnapping my boyfriend!" she crowed.

Keeping her sword ready, Kiara jumped through the portal and found herself warped over into a campsite full of robot parts and pieces of metal. Kiara was quite surprised to see this but she didn't have much time to observe the scenery for a hard hand smacked her in the back of the head and knocked her down onto the ground. Kiara felt dizzy from the smack and her head was swimming. She could barely tell which way was up and she found herself unable to stand up again. The hand that had hit her was of course, the hand of Raphael. Raphael laughed at his downed intruder and he picked Kiara up by the scabbard on her back.

"Well, well. What have we here?" he chortled delightedly "A scrawny cheetah girl? She'll make a great cyborg too."

Before Kiara could register who was holding her and what the voice had just said to her, Raphael conked her on the head with his fist and knocked her clean out. Now Kiara was subdued, he was free to do what he liked to the helpless cheetah…

Footnotes:

We saw all that in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 184

******* **See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Story 157***

Well this is a fine mess isn't it?

How will Dark and Kiara get out of this one? Tune into Part 2 to find out...

Terror of the Cyber-Husky 2

Arc 24: Terror of the Cyber-Husky

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 184 & 185

Part 2: Cyber Showdown

A simple date had ended up spiralling into despair. Amazing how quickly the day can turn against you when you're doing something as simple as having a date.

Dark Cat the Leo-Lynx and Kiara the Cheetah had had the day to themselves and decided to have a lunch together in Dark's tent back in the Megapolis Royal Fighter's camp. But no sooner had they eaten, the camp had been invaded by robotic dogs that belonged to a maniacal husky named Raphael, who was a cyborg and wished to make everybody into a cyborg. Dark had ended up getting kidnapped by the robot dogs and Kiara had gone on a trek to find him and rescue him. Sadly though, after finding the camp she ended up getting knocked out by Raphael and now Raphael was preparing her for a cybernetic makeover. While Kiara was unconscious, Raphael confiscated her sword and scabbard, stripped her to the waist and chained her to a metal cross directly next to Dark. Kiara was in Dark's position now, chained to a cross and deprived of her shirt. Her black bra and flat, slim belly were now visible and Kiara would not like this at all. Raphael stared at Kiara's torso, clearly thinking she looked good with no shirt on and felt pleased that he'd taken it off. He then took Dark's metal gag off and shook the two felines to wake them up. He quite fancied seeing Kiara's reaction to the fact she was now in Dark's position and wondered how Dark would react to seeing Kiara there. Kiara and Dark both woke up after so much vigorous shaking from Raphael and the first thing Kiara did was gasp in horror at the fact she was restrained. She pulled on her cuffs but they held firm. She was trapped. Dark turned to his right after hearing Kiara struggle and he gasped in horror at the fact his girlfriend had been captured too. He was a little stunned at the fact

Kiara had no shirt on now but he knew why this was the case. Raphael had stripped him so it was just like him to strip Kiara too.

"Kiara?!" shrieked Dark.

Kiara turned to her right and saw that Dark was directly beside her. She was pleased to have found Dark but not pleased at the fact he was chained up too and she couldn't help him.

"Dark!" cried Kiara "Oh thank god you're OK! I feared something terrible would have happened to you!"

"Something terrible is about to happen to me and I bet it'll happen to you too." said Dark grimly.

"Well the fact that we're both chained to a cross is horrible enough and I bet the kidnapper's going to give us a lengthy torture session or something." muttered Kiara "I must ask why you have no shirt on Dark. Did the kidnapper take it off or something?" she added, staring at Dark's torso and finding it hard to keep her eyes off of it.

"He did." muttered Dark "He did the same to you too."

Kiara looked down at her body and saw that surely enough, she had no shirt on. Her bra and her belly were showing and Kiara didn't like that at all. She screamed in horror and then glared at Raphael, the cyber-husky clearly looking amused at Kiara's reaction.

"You pervert! Why the hell did you take my shirt off?!" screeched Kiara.

"I do that to any victim I capture." explained Raphael "Since most of my work on turning a Mobian into a cyborg is done on the upper body and I can do without any pesky shirts getting in the way. Besides why would a girl as cute as you want to cover up anyway?" he added with a dirty smile on his face.

"You're sick and I'm gonna kick your ass when I get outta these chains!" snarled Kiara, tugging furiously on her arms and legs in a feeble attempt to get free.

"Don't make me laugh doll-face, you're not getting outta these cuffs

anytime soon." sneered Raphael, grabbing the cheetah's face and shaking it playfully "You're staying where you are until your cybernetic makeover is complete."

"What the hell are you on about you crazy husky?" piped Kiara.

Raphael released Kiara's face and he flashed a sinister smile that made Kiara shudder.

"I am a Cyber-Husky and my goal is to make everybody in the world a cyborg." explained Raphael "But I'm doing it for a very good reason. We Mobians are weak and pathetic as we are now but with cybernetic upgrades, we will be stronger and we will become a better race that will be more perfect and likelier to survive. Believe me my pretty little cheetah, I have good intentions and everybody will appreciate my hard work that I'm going through to make the Mobians stronger and better."

Kiara just gaped at Raphael as if she'd just heard the worst written story in the world and then she turned to Dark. Dark just looked stone-faced for he already knew what Raphael was up to having been told it earlier. He could easily see that Kiara thought the same as him, that Raphael was a bit insane in the head.

"When did that wacko lose his mind?" burbled Kiara "He's seriously the biggest lunatic I've ever seen in my life!"

Raphael frowned at Kiara, disgusted that she seriously had the gall to think that about him. He rolled his eyes and folded his arms.

"I'm doing the Mobians a favour and you dismiss me as a lunatic?" scoffed Raphael "You really do need a cybernetic upgrade you do."

"You're not turning me into some proxy tin-can person you insane wacko!" shrieked Kiara angrily "I'd sooner die than become a cyborg and be a freak like you!"

"I AM NOT A FREAK!" roared Raphael, his voice so loud and powerful that Kiara's hair blew out behind her "I am an example of what the Mobian race should be like! We've done well to survive as organics but as a mixture of organic and technology, we can be an

even better race and be perfect! You'll learn to appreciate my efforts once you're converted little girl!"

"I don't wanna be converted!" snapped Kiara "I love my body the way it is and I don't wanna change a thing about it!"

"Same goes to me!" yelled Dark "You can't just change us and expect us to like what you've done to us! We don't want to become cyborgs so we won't appreciate what you do to us! Just stop your senseless ambition and let us go already!"

"Right, just for your insolence I'll convert you two now and I'll do it while **you're both awake** so it'll be worse for you two than when you're unconscious!" snarled Raphael, pointing a metallic finger at Dark and Kiara "And don't bother begging for mercy because you're not getting any! You asked for this horror and I'm gonna give it to ya both!"

Dark and Kiara could only stare in terror at Raphael. They couldn't believe what they were hearing. He was going to convert them into cyborgs while they were still conscious?! They could already imagine how horrible and painful the process was going to be. Saw blades would like be coming out to chop their limbs off and leave them to be replaced by cybernetic limbs and Raphael would likely make sure that it hurt and that it hurt very much. They could even imagine some kind of sharp tool being used to rip out their eyeballs from their sockets and leave them to be replaced by optics and maybe their stomachs would be slit open and Raphael would see to replacing their internal organs with machine parts. They might be dead by the time they get to that part but all the stuff that came before it would be terrible and unbearable pain for them both. Whereas Dark was too shocked to move, Kiara started writhing around in complete terror, trying desperately to break free and run as far away from Raphael as possible.

"No! NO! Oh god no, please, you can't do that!" screamed Kiara "Let us go! LET US GO! WE DON'T WANNA GO THROUGH THIS TORTURE!"

"Too bad toots. You should've kept your trap shut shouldn't you?" snarled Raphael "And because you're the one who drove me to this

decision, I think I'll convert you first."

"NO!" shrieked Kiara, her heart nearly stopping in shock as Raphael said that.

"Don't you dare touch her!" shouted Dark defiantly "Leave her alone! Convert me first instead! I can't bear to watch Kiara get hurt!"

"Doesn't matter who goes first, you'll bear witness to each other's pain as I do the process anyway." snorted Raphael "Kiara goes first and that's the end of it!"

"No please no!" wailed Kiara, her eyes streaming with tears of fright "Don't turn me into a cyborg! I'll do anything you want just please don't convert me!"

"You're not gonna sway my decision you stupid girl." growled Raphael, drawing out a blade from his wrist section and holding it over Kiara's heart "Now shut up before I decide to find out what your heart looks like!"

That threat really made Kiara think twice before saying anything else. The cheetah just stared into Raphael's fearsome red eyes, too frightened to speak anymore or even move for that matter. She started trembling and her face went pale. Kiara was awfully squeamish and extreme gore was enough to have her shivering like a person standing butt-naked in the middle of Antarctica. Pleased that his threat made Kiara keep quiet, Raphael sheathed his blade and walked over to the tool shelf to get the first tool he would use to prepare Kiara's brutal, gruesome transformation. Given how much Kiara couldn't stand extreme gore, the poor girl would likely die of fright before Raphael could even chop anything off. Kiara watched with fear as Raphael went over his various options. She turned to Dark, the leo-lynx looking as frightened as her and scarcely daring to imagine what Raphael would do first to his poor girlfriend.

"Oh Dark…we have to get outta here before Raphael chops us to pieces!" squeaked Kiara "How will we get outta these stupid cuffs?"

She tugged on her restraints as hard as she possibly could but the tungsten carbide cuffs held firm and refused to let go of Kiara's

limbs.

"I wish I could just use my blades to cut us free but Raphael's got these needles pumping a serum that stops me from using them in my arms." moaned Dark, looking up at the syringes that were embedded up to the base of the needle in his lower arms and still pumping the yellowy liquid that was keeping him from using his blades "I'm afraid I can't help us Kiara."

"That is inconvenient." muttered Kiara, glaring at the syringes as if their very presence was mocking her and Dark on their situation "Although since we're so close to each other, maybe I can use my tail to pull one of the syringes out and you'll be able to use one of your blades to cut free." she suggested hopefully

"Let's hope your tail is long enough." said Dark with a look of concern on his face.

Kiara decided to try out her idea for she was in a desperate moment right now. Raphael would soon be ready to convert her into a cyborg and Kiara would be subjected to the worst pain imaginable. Dark would soon follow after she'd been done. Kiara raised her tail and she stretched it out as far as she could. Her tail was long but unfortunately, not long enough to reach the syringe cables. Kiara strained to reach but her tail just wouldn't go any further. Kiara had no hopes of getting any closer for the cuffs held her stretched out limbs in place and she couldn't edge any further. Also the cross was too solidly built so Kiara couldn't simply rock herself closer. Her plan wouldn't work after all. Kiara was too desperate to become a cyborg though so she didn't give up. She tried and tried but she couldn't reach the syringe cables. Dark tried using his own tail to do it instead but given the cables were behind him, he couldn't see where he was aiming his tail and thus, found it extremely difficult to find the cables. Then suddenly, Raphael started coming back towards them. He had chosen the tool to which he would use to start his operation on Kiara. He had a huge saw blade in his hands and the sheer size of the blade made Kiara gulp and sweat in fear. The blade was about 30 cm wide and had at least fifteen sharp teeth on it. It looked like it could cut through just about anything and Raphael was going to use it on her. Raphael eyed Kiara's body and thought to himself with a hand on his chin.

"Hmm…what should I do with you?" he mused "Give you cybernetic arms? Cybernetic legs? One of each? Should I cut you in half and make your entire lower section metal? I know…how about both cybernetic arms AND legs?" he asked, a wicked smirk appearing on his evil face.

"NO!" whimpered Kiara.

"You know, you're so cute when you're scared." laughed Raphael "This will be a lot of fun I can tell, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Grinning with a sadistic sense of pleasure that would make Marik the Martian proud, Raphael turned the saw on. The saw spun around at a devastating, terrifying 50,00 RPM and the squeal that emitted from the deadly saw was agonizing. Dark cringed as his ears wailed in protest against the horrible noise that was piercing his eardrums and Kiara shuddered in terror. She was in an utter state of horror. Too shocked to move or even faint as the saw blade edged towards her. Raphael aimed at her left shoulder and slowly edge the saw towards it. He was going to cut off her arms and then her legs and once he'd done that, he would replace them with cybernetic limbs. Goodness knows what he would do next once he'd done with the limbs. Kiara squirmed frantically, making one last desperate bid to get free and away from the saw blade. But Kiara knew it was pointless to struggle. She knew she couldn't get free. She gave up her struggling and just waited for Raphael to churn the saw blade through her arm and severe it off. The squeal of the deadly saw grew louder as it came closer to her. Kiara's heart was thumping so fast that she could hardly feel it anymore. It was beating too fast for her to register the individual beats. Dark closed his eyes and waited for Kiara's pained screams to happen. He could hardly bear to watch his girlfriend get chopped to pieces. Then just as the saw was about four inches away from Kiara's arm, the cheetah suddenly had an idea. She lashed out with her tail and whipped Raphael in the thigh. Raphael winced in pain and he lowered the saw to rub his thigh better. Now he was distracted, Kiara wrapped her tail around the handle of the saw blade and she yanked on it. Raphael was brought tumbling forward as the saw blade was pulled on and tugged forwards. Then Kiara sent it careening to the right, whipping her tail forward in order to provide the momentum needed to send the saw

awry. Kiara's aim couldn't have been more perfect for the saw blade churned through the serum bottle that was feeding the liquid up the cables and into the syringes in Dark's arms. The gash in the bottle caused all the liquid to fall back down the cables into the bottle and then spill all over the ground. Now the fluid was gone and Dark wasn't getting anymore of it in his body, he drew out his blades. Given his wrists were shackled and the blades drew out of his arms, the tip of the blades hooked under the cuffs and as Dark willed for them to come out, the blades pushed on the cuffs and eventually sliced through them after the cuffs gave in to the strain the blades put on them. Now his arms were free, Dark cut his legs free and then proceeded to free Kiara. Using his blades carefully, he forced the cuffs open and Kiara dropped down onto the ground. She and Dark hugged each other with joy and then proceeded to run for their lives. Raphael picked himself up and he growled fiercely at his escaped prisoners.

"Oh no you don't!" he snarled.

He lowered his head and he activated his sonic wave emitter. The sonic waves blasted out of Raphael's head harness and they whooshed through the air and towards Dark and Kiara. It was like a tunnel of rings was chasing down the two felines and said tunnel was gaining on them and fast. Dark and Kiara tried to outrun the sonic waves but despite their great speed, they couldn't outrun the sonic waves. The ground kicked up from the waves chasing down and as the damage reached their heels, they began to lose balance and slow down. More than enough for the waves to hit Dark and Kiara and send them flying through the air. Kiara screamed as she was whisked off her feet and thrown across the terrain like a kicked up stone. Dark grabbed Kiara and held her close, shielding her with his body as they hit the ground. Dark winced as his body took the full force of the impact but he was otherwise unhurt. He and Kiara picked themselves up and gasped as a portal opened up from nowhere and Raphael's hands reached out to grab them. They dodged as he tried to grab them and they grabbed his wrists. The two felines tugged on Raphael's arms and brought him through the portal so he was now meeting them. They threw Raphael onto his back, the impact knocking the wind out of Raphael. One disadvantage about having cybernetics is when you fall, you fall

hard and something like this was enough to make Raphael wince and splutter. Dark held his blades at the ready while Kiara whizzed back towards the camp to retrieve her broadsword. Raphael picked himself up and growled furiously at Dark. His eyes were full of rage and his teeth were bared.

"I'm trying to improve our race and this is how you repay me?!" roared Raphael "You're not worth the effort of converting! Nor your pretty girlfriend too! I'll chop you both to pieces but I ain't bringing you back as cyborgs!"

"That's your loss then." muttered Dark "It goes against what you're trying to do after all."

"Let's see if you and that wise mouth of yours will still make any wisecracks when I'm finished with you Dark Cat!" shouted Raphael

Raphael lowered his head and blasted Dark off of his feet with a trail of sonic waves. Dark hurled through the air as the waves hit him and he came down with a heavy thud on the ground. The impact had done a number on him for he found it hard to get back up and pain seemed to flare up every inch of his body. Dark forced himself onto his feet, only to get hit by another round of sonic waves that threw him backwards across the terrain. Dark grunted and gritted his teeth, holding in the pain and forcing himself back onto his feet. Raphael just laughed mockingly at Dark Cat as he strode up to him. He clearly seemed to think that he had this battle in the bag and had pretty much already won.

"You're pathetic. You can't even match up to me!" he gloated "And I'm not even using my full potential! Other people I've fought managed to counter my sonic waves and beat me but you can't you insignificant little boy!"

"Will you still be able to gloat when I cut you to pieces and leave you to fix yourself asshole?!" snarled Dark crossly.

His more feral side was beginning to kick in. Despite not showing it much, Dark would often become more fierce and savage when under extreme stress and anger. It was due to his wild side that had been exploited at his own expense during his time in Chun-Nan.

He'd fought to control his wild side and had done a good job at it but now, he couldn't help but succumb to it. Roaring fiercely, Dark ran towards Raphael with his blades scything through the air as he prepared to let him have it. Raphael cackled mockingly at Dark and he blasted him off his feet with yet another tunnel of sonic waves. Dark hit the ground again and growled menacingly at his opponent. He was getting sick and tired of being hit by the sonic waves now so he decided to put a stop to that once and for all. He picked himself up but he didn't charge directly at Raphael. Instead, he darted off to the left. Raphael watched in obfuscation, wondering what Dark was up to. Dark ran around behind Raphael and he charged towards him. Raphael spun around on his heel but Dark was too fast for him to react. Dark swung his blades and slashed Raphael across the face. Raphael reacted with a bloodcurdling roar of anguish and Dark smirked at him. He drew his blade back and he aimed at Raphael's sonic wave emitter. He was about to slash it to bits but Raphael held his arm up and blocked Dark's attack. In a position like this, he could use his sonic wave emitter again but Raphael knew that he was just making himself predictable and giving Dark something to take advantage of. Instead, he decided to save his sonic waves for later. Instead he swung his arm aside and threw Dark off balance. Taking advantage, he lashed out with a powerful kick to the rib on Dark. The kick winded Dark and threw him onto his side. Dark gripped his side and tenderly started to rub it better. He was astonished Raphael hadn't cracked any ribs with that kick. Raphael advanced on Dark and he seized the leo-lynx by the scruff of his neck. He hoisted Dark off the ground and he tossed him through the air as far as he possibly could. He landed painfully on his side and skidded to a cringing halt just a few yards away from Raphael's camp. Dark picked himself up and he grimaced as the scrape marks on his arm and side began to sting furiously. He tenderly eased the pain in the scrapes with a soft massage and turned around as Raphael came thundering towards him like a wild bull. He was cackling maniacally as he charged across the terrain. Dark however was ready for him. He waited until Raphael was a few metres away before leaping out of the way. Raphael rocketed past him and skidded to a halt as he passed Dark. Dark charged up to Raphael just as he stopped skidding and he uppercut Raphael in the chin. Raphael's head snapped backwards from the punch and he nearly stumbled over. Dark extended two fingers and he jabbed Raphael sharply in the

stomach. That was one of his weaker areas for he hadn't cybernetically enhanced that part of his body. He wouldn't be able to enjoy the joys of eating if he did that after all. Raphael coughed as the wind was jabbed out of him and Dark proceeded to sock him directly in the mouth. Raphael stumbled backwards, clutching his sore mouth and Dark extended his foot out. He pulled himself forward and then socked him in the chest. Raphael gripped his chest but he didn't rub it better. He let the pain go away itself and he lunged at Dark with a punch that could shatter rocks. Dark ducked to the side and he grabbed Raphael's wrist. He pulled Raphael over his shoulder and slammed him onto his back. Raphael picked himself up only for Dark to spin on the balls of his feet and them roundhouse kick him in the back of his head. Raphael yelped as he was suddenly thrown onto his face. He was back on his feet in no time and he turned to face Dark. He had a rather cruel smirk on his face.

"An admirable effort but you have not won this battle yet fur-face." he sneered "I'll win yet!"

"Then stop wasting your breath and fight already." snorted Dark with a mocking smile on his face.

Raphael did not wait to be asked twice. He drew out his hand blades and he lunged at Dark. Dark lashed out and the two clashed blades with each other, the clang of metal against metal ringing in their ear drums as their weapons made contact. Raphael and Dark drew their weapons back and clashed again, pushing hard on each other as they tried to win the battle.

Over at Raphael's camp, Kiara finally found her confiscated sword and scabbard. Raphael had left it lying near his working tools, hinting that he probably planned on keeping the sword for himself and would likely use it for dissection purposes. Kiara would use it for dissection purposes too…with Raphael being the one who's going to be dissected that is. She slung the scabbard over onto her back. She drew out her sword and was about to run off and help Dark fight Raphael but a small group of Robot Attack Dogs stood in her way. They had sensed their master was in trouble and had decided to try and keep Kiara away from the battle so Raphael could deal with Dark on his own. The dogs had been programmed to aid their

master in anyway they deemed necessary and in this case, they thought evening the odds was a necessary way to aid Raphael in this battle. Kiara stood poised with her sword at the ready and the Robot Attack Dogs advanced on her, snarling mechanical snarls and baring their metal teeth.

"Come at me you metal mutts! I'll just slice you all to bits!" yelled Kiara challengingly.

One Robot Attack Dog was foolish enough to comply with that order. The dog lunged at Kiara with its teeth and claws bared and ready to attack but Kiara swung the sword and chopped the dog clean in half. It's upper and lower body came down with a pair of clangs on the ground. The dog's visor blinked and went blank as the life seeped from its severed body. Pleased with herself, Kiara lunged towards another robot dog and she swung her sword at it. The dog jumped over the sword blade as it swept underneath him and it chomped at the air in front of Kiara's hands. Kiara recoiled and she swung the sword again. The robot dog backed away, causing the sword to cleave through the air that had momentarily been occupied by its head. Another robot dog snuck up behind Kiara and pounced on her. Kiara swung around and severed the dog straight down the middle, the two halves falling away and crashing onto the ground. The dog she had been attacking earlier leaped onto Kiara's back. The cheetah threw herself onto the ground and slammed the dog against the rough rock beneath her feet to make it let go. She picked herself up and then impaled the dog through the chest with her sword. Another robot dog opened its mouth and launched its metal tongue at Kiara's wrist. It wrapped around her wrist but Kiara was quick to slice the tongue in two before it could electrocute her and knock her out as it had done to Dark earlier. The dog yelped as its tongue was severed and Kiara gave the dog a swift chop to the neck with her sword. The one single blow took the dog's head off and left it bouncing to a stop across the ground. The dog's headless body collapsed onto the ground, lifeless and of no use to Raphael anymore. Kiara flipped her hair aside and smirked at the dog's she'd just destroyed.

"Come on! You call this a fight?" she scoffed "My boyfriend's a better fighter than me and you lot managed to subdue him! I'm only

a rookie and I'm kicking your asses! And I thought this battle was going to be tough…"

Kiara should know better than to gloat in the middle of a battle for a robot dog pounced onto her back and brought her down onto the ground. The cheetah squirmed wildly as the dog pinned her down and snarled viciously into her ear. Kiara wrapped her tail around the dog's back leg and she yanked on its leg, pulling the dog off of herself and she managed to get back onto her feet. She picked up the sword and spun around to slice up the robot dog. She soon realized she had more than one to deal with. An entire pack of robot dogs stood before her, their numbers about twenty or more, and they all advanced menacingly on Kiara. The cheetah gulped and took a step backwards. She hadn't expected so many robot dogs to come onto the scene. She didn't think she could take on so many robot dogs at once, especially if they all attacked her at once. Kiara kept the sword raised in the vain hope that it would actually scare the dogs away and she backed off as they advanced on her. She could feel beads of sweat trickling down her face as she thought desperately for a plan. It would take brains to beat all the robot dogs and although Kiara wasn't the best thinker, she was determined to find a way to beat the dogs altogether. As Kiara backed away, she stumbled across a barrel of oil. The oil would be used to make the mechanical parts of the cyborgs run. Kiara knew full well how dangerous oil could be, especially when in contact with fire. It was fortuitous that there also happened to be a welding tool nearby as well. Kiara used her sword to create a gash in the oil barrel and then she grabbed the welding tool. She waited for all the oil in the barrel to spill out onto the ground, forming a huge puddle that spread out across the camp and lapped up at the feet of the oblivious robot dogs. They continued to advance on Kiara, ignoring the oil completely for it didn't register as relevant to them. Kiara sheathed her sword, switched on the welding tool and then tossed it into the air. Then she ran for her life as the burning tool spiralled down onto the ground and landed on the oil puddle. The black, gooey liquid was immediately set ablaze by the welding tool's small but extremely hot flame and since the dogs were standing in the oil, the fire blazed over them and started burning them all alive. The dogs howled in despair as they were burnt by the flaming oil. Then a huge explosion that tore the camp apart erupted as the flames burnt away

at the oil. The dogs were vaporized in an instant and the explosion proceeded to tear apart the entire camp. Kiara had luckily gotten out of range so the explosion didn't touch her. Now the dogs were out of the way, Kiara ran off to help Dark defeat Raphael.

As for Raphael, he'd heard the explosion and he looked up from his fight with Dark to see what had happened. Dark also looked up to see what the explosion was. As Raphael observed the scene before him, he could only stare in sheer horror at what had happened. His beautiful camp had been reduced to a blazing wreck of flames, debris and oil and smoke trailed up from the flames that ate away at the remains of his camp. The camp was the only thing he had to call home and now it was gone, he was homeless. The husky looked like he was about to have a fit but his reaction was considerably calmer than that.

"M…My camp!" spluttered Raphael "I…It's destroyed! Who the hell's gone and destroyed my camp?!"

"I think I can guess." said Dark grimly "I just hope Kiara didn't get caught up in the explosion."

"I hope so too…so that I can kill her myself!" snarled Raphael, clenching his metal fists in rage for he too had an idea on who destroyed his camp.

The two soon found out the final fate of Kiara for both Dark and Raphael could see somebody sprinting towards them. It was Kiara. She had her sword drawn and ready and she looked about ready to kill. His face full of fury, Raphael stood his ground in a battle ready stance and he lowered his head. Before he could activate his sonic waves though, Dark forced his head upwards by grabbing his neck and yanking him back. The sonic waves blasted up into the sky as Raphael's head was forced upwards. Kiara now had the perfect opportunity to attack the husky. She leaped towards Raphael, twirled through the air and slashed him across the torso with her sword. Raphael bellowed a thunderous roar of anguish as a large gash spread across his stomach and began to trickle with blood. He fell down onto his knees and clutches his wound as if his life depended on it healing. Kiara held the sword just above his head and Dark held his blade just behind Raphael's neck. The husky was

stalemated. He couldn't really do anything without causing himself to get hurt or killed. He glowered at Kiara, the cheetah's face cold and full of apathy as she glared at him.

"It's over freak. Your camp's destroyed and you're beaten." said Kiara in a voice that sounded very sinister coming out of her given her usual chipper but stubborn attitude "Surrender now and we won't have to hurt you."

"Do you not think ruining my life's work has hurt me already?" sniffed Raphael crossly.

"Well then, surrender now and we won't have to hurt you anymore than we have done." said Kiara.

"Don't worry Raphael, we'll find you a nice cell to live in." said Dark with a triumphant smirk on his face.

"Oh I'm sure you can." said Raphael "Too bad that I won't be living in it!"

He then aimed his head straight down at the ground and activated his sonic wave emitter. The sonic waves pounded into the ground and the strength that the waves carried in them were enough to push Raphael straight up into the air and out of harm's way. The waves pounding the ground were enough to throw Dark and Kiara off balance and onto their backs as the ground shook and cracked beneath them. Raphael laughed as he hurled through the air and he activated a portal directly underneath himself just as he began to fall down to the ground. He disappeared through the portal and then reappeared just before Dark and Kiara as they stood back up. He cracked his metallic knuckles and scowled menacingly at his opponents.

"You kitty-cats have ruined everything and now I'm going to make you both pay for what you've done." he growled "Hope you said your farewells because you won't live to see another sunrise."

"We haven't said our farewells because this isn't the end for us yet!" retorted Dark.

"We're gonna kick your ass cyber-freak!" screeched Kiara, raising her sword and getting ready to attack.

"For the last freaking time, I am NOT a freak!" bellowed Raphael.

He lowered his head and blasted the two Mobians full on with his sonic wave emitter. Dark and Kiara felt like they'd been punched by a giant fist as they were sent flying away from Raphael by the sonic waves. The two felines came down with a heavy thud on the ground that knocked the wind out of them. The forced themselves up onto their hands and knees despite their arms straining to take the weight of their worn out bodies. They couldn't find the strength to push themselves onto their feet for the moment though. This gave Raphael the opportunity to rush up towards Dark and Kiara and the grab them by their necks. He picked up Dark and Kiara and proceeded to throttle the two as hard as he could. His grip was like a pair of pliers only much harder. Dark and Kiara squirmed in the husky's tough grip, trying desperately to get free as their air supply was quickly being diminished by Raphael's iron grasp. Dark unsheathed his blades and he raised his left arm, aiming for Raphael's arm. Raphael just threw Dark away to save himself losing an arm as Dark prepared to severe it. Dark bounded back into action and ran towards Raphael but the husky threw Kiara straight at him. The cheetah knocked Dark off of his feet as she crashed into him. Raphael ran towards the two to do something else to them but Dark and Kiara rolled out of his way and left him to charge straight past them. Kiara leaped up off the ground and back onto her feet. Raphael stopped and turned around. He charged towards Kiara but the cheetah stood aside and raised her leg. Raphael couldn't stop himself in time and ended up tripping over Kiara's outstretched leg. He fell head over heels onto his face and came to a stop on his stomach, groaning in annoyance at the fact he'd just fallen for something so basic as a trip up. Kiara picked up her broadsword, which she had dropped after being hit by sonic waves earlier, and she ran towards Raphael. Raphael stood back up, deployed his hand blades and swung around to block Kiara's attack. The blades clanged nosily together and Kiara could feel her sword shuddering in her hands as she hit Raphael's blades. There was some strength on those blades that's for sure. Raphael swung his blades to the side, scraping against the metal of Kiara's sword and he swung them

back at Kiara. Kiara held the sword horizontally to block Raphael's powerful blows. Raphael hit the sword so hard that he nearly knocked it out of her hands. Kiara knew she had to be more careful or Raphael would knock the sword out of her hands. Once he did that, Kiara would be vulnerable. Kiara swung the sword at Raphael and managed to nick him across the cheek. Raphael didn't seem to register that attack though. A little nick on the cheek wasn't enough to harm a tough cyborg like Raphael. Dark ran in to help Kiara but Raphael turned around and walloped him in the forehead with his lower arm. The attack left Dark feeling a little dizzy and his head began to throb vigorously. Kiara retaliated with a slash across the arm on Raphael. Raphael ignored the pain in his arms and he prepared to attack again. Raphael swung his blades at Kiara and Kiara held her sword up to block the attack. Big mistake for Raphael ended up knocking it clean out of her hands! Kiara wasn't deterred in the slightest though, she just struck back with a kick to the gut on Raphael. Raphael doubled over and Kiara ran over to grab her sword. But as she grabbed it, Raphael turned around and fired another round of sonic waves into her. The waves hit Kiara and slammed her hard against a cliff wall that loomed above the battlefield. Kiara screamed and wailed as the waves pounded against her and it was made all the worse at the fact she was now pinned against the wall by the hammering waves. It was agonizingly painful and Kiara couldn't do anything about it.

"Dark…help…!" she spluttered weakly.

Dark, who was still on the ground after Raphael's earlier attack, rushed over to Kiara's aid. Raphael heard Dark coming towards him and he switched off his sonic wave emitter. Kiara dropped down onto the ground, relieved that the terrible torture was over but she felt very weak and unable to stand up for a moment. She lay back and rested for a minute while Raphael turned to face Dark. Dark drew his arms back and prepared to let Raphael have it with his blades. But Raphael blasted him onto the ground with another round of sonic waves. Dark lay on the ground, grimacing tensely and trying to get back up. Raphael advanced on him and continued firing his sonic waves at him. Dark gritted his teeth and tried as hard as he could to fight the hammering waves that pounded against him vigorously. Raphael grinned horribly as Dark was at his mercy. He

stood where he was and let his sonic wave emitter continue to pound Dark into submission. If he kept it up for too long, he could potentially kill the leo-lynx. And that was just what he intended to do. Dark tried as hard as he could to fight the sonic waves but his strength wouldn't obey him. The waves were too powerful and he had already been weakened from Raphael's earlier attacks. He couldn't fight the powerful waves at all. Kiara saw Dark getting pummelled brutally by the sonic waves and the sight of her boyfriend in danger brought new strength to her. She forced herself onto her feet and she jogged over to Raphael. Raphael didn't hear her, he was too busy focusing on Dark Cat. This gave Kiara the opportunity to leap onto his back and yank his head backwards by pulling on his ears. The sonic waves stopped pounding Dark and instead shot up into the sky as Raphael's head was forced upwards. Dark could only gasp a sigh of relief as the sonic waves ended. Raphael yelped in pain as Kiara pulled on his ears. Kiara then brought Raphael down onto his back and stomped on his forehead. The stomp broke his sonic wave emitter. Raphael could feel the cracks spreading through the forehead piece where the sonic waves came from. Raphael growled furiously in anger at what had just happened.

"You broke it you dumb bitch!" he bellowed, picking himself up and glowering at Kiara "That sonic wave emitter was the pinnacle of my technology!"

"Oh cry me a river!" retorted Kiara "That thing was getting on my nerves anyway!"

She spun around on her foot and walloped Raphael in the face with a roundhouse kick that knocked Raphael down onto his side. Raphael stood back up and he deployed his blades once again. But before he could harm Kiara, Dark jumped in and swung his blade down on Raphael's wrists. He ended up severing Raphael's blades and they fell down onto the ground. Raphael had lost both of his hands. The cyborg husky could only wail in extreme anguish as pain flared up through his now empty wrist sections. Dark and Kiara just smirked at Raphael. He was dead now. With no hands and no sonic wave emitter, he wouldn't be able to do much fighting now. Raphael backed away from his opponents and he growled savagely over his defeat.

"You'll pay for this felines! Mark me words, you will pay for this!" snarled Raphael.

"Oh I don't think so loser." snorted Kiara "You're going to be locked up for your crimes and me and Dark will be praised for our efforts."

"Give it up Raphael and we'll go easy on you!" demanded Dark Cat fiercely.

"You'll have to catch me first…" muttered Raphael.

He turned and ran for it as fast as he possibly could. Dark and Kiara ran after him but Raphael had one sneaky way of escaping them. In one of the pockets on his belt, he had a spare portal creating button similar to the ones on his wrists only that this button was on a remote. He had that in case he needed another way of creating a portal should his wrist mounted portal creators be damaged in anyway. He pressed the button with what remained of his lower arm after losing his hands and a portal opened up just ahead of himself. He dived into the portal and disappeared from sight, leaving a furious Dark and Kiara behind to curse over their failure to apprehend him. The portal closed up behind Raphael as he entered it and Dark shook his fist in rage.

"Darn! He got away!" he moaned "The brute had another way of making a portal on him!"

"Well I hope that wherever he ends up he gets caught and jailed for what he tried to do to us." muttered Kiara bitterly "I'm still appalled at the fact he had the gall to try and carve us to pieces and make us freakish cyborg things! Ugh!"

"I hope he gets his comeuppance too babe." said Dark grimly "Nobody with a goal that nefarious should be allowed to roam freely."

"I'll say." sighed Kiara "You know what, he reminds me of Dr. Eggman in a way. Eggman wants to make everybody a robot right? Well he just wants to make everybody a cyborg."

"That'd be a little better since we'd still have some of our organic

side left in us." murmured Dark "But it's still unnatural and shouldn't be done if people don't want to become cyborgs. If only Raphael could see that…"

"Well he's a crazy evil lunatic. I don't think he'll see that at all." grumbled Kiara "At least we have common sense."

"Indeed Kiara." said Dark, taking her hand into his own "And by the way…thank you for coming to rescue me. And double thank you for saving my life when Raphael had me pinned."

Kiara grinned sweetly at Dark and she took his other hand into her own.

"You're very welcome handsome." she said kindly "I saved you from death once, I just had to do it again. And I don't know what I'd do if you were turned into a cyborg."

"I would be horrified if I became a cyborg and I'd be horrified to see you become a cyborg too." said Dark "I'm glad we're keeping our bodies the way they're supposed to be and we're not going to have any cybernetics."

"I am too my dashing leo-lynx." purred Kiara, pulling Dark close and resting her head on his furry chest "By the way…did I ever tell you how good you look with no shirt on?" she giggled teasingly.

Dark just blushed and returned the hug. How warm Kiara felt when he hugged her like this. They had been so caught up in the battle that they only just remembered that they still had no shirts on thanks to Raphael removing them earlier for his conversions.

"I could say the same about you Kiara." he chuckled "Now then, how's about we get back to the camp before Thomas Tiger worries about us?"

"I'm up for that." said Kiara happily "I want to get as far away from here as possible."

"Before we leave though…" said Dark hesitantly.

He leaned forward and kissed Kiara on the lips. Delighted, Kiara

kissed him back and the two kissed and stroked one another for a minute before separating and departing back off for home. The two walked hand in hand, wanting to remain linked as they walked home. They'd been through a tough time together and now they could go home and rest from the day's events, as well as finish their interrupted date. They'd be ready for those chocolate muffins that they hadn't eaten once they got back to camp that's for sure…

Meanwhile, Raphael remerged from a portal that opened up just in front of his destroyed camp. He hadn't decided to go far for he wanted to see if there was anything that could be salvaged from the camp. As he took in his surroundings, he noticed that the fire was beginning to die down but he could see that the damage had been done and that everything was beyond saving in this camp. The ground had blackened and become a carpet of ashes spreading all around the area, lumps of melted metal and broken barrel chunks littered the ground and the tools and equipment were unrecognizable, merely melted, misshapen metal chunks that no longer had shape or structure to them. There was nothing left. The camp had been ravaged thanks to Kiara's meddling and there was nothing he could do to fix his severed hands. Raphael roared loudly at the heavens above as if hoping an angel would hear him and then descend down from up high to help him.

"It's ruined! Everything's ruined!" he wailed "Damn that filthy cheetah for destroying my camp!"

He stomped the ground in rage and kicked up the soil as if he had a personal grudge against it.

"When I get my hands on those two, I'm gonna rip them to pieces and serve their remains for dinner…as soon as I get new hands!" he moaned, looking at his empty wrists.

Neat circles at the end of his lower arm showed where his hands would have been had he not lost them. Given they were metal, there was only wire and circuitry in the empty wrists, no flesh or bone at all. Lucky for Raphael for he'd be able to replace his hands but without any tools or robot dogs to do the work for him, he'd be stuck

with no hands for a while.

"I need to find a scientist or something so that they can fix my hands!" deduced Raphael "And once my hands are fixed, I can get my revenge on those miserable moggies! But where am I gonna find somebody who can fix my hands?! And my sonic wave emitter for that matter?!"

"I believe I can answer that." purred a gentlemanly voice that made Raphael leap into the air in surprise.

Raphael turned around to see that he was not along. A grey furred wolf in an unusual bodysuit, skull mask and crimson cape stood ominously before him with a rather dark look in his eye. Raphael narrowed his eyes down to confused slits that suggested he wasn't sure what to think of this stranger.

"Uh…who the heck are you?" asked Raphael.

"I am Ravage Bloodfang and I wish to recruit you into a group that you will find most interesting." explained the wolf.

"I'm Raphael the Cyber-Husky." introduced Raphael "And what did you come here for again?"

"I came here to find you and recruit you into a group that I am a member of." explained Ravage "It appears I arrived at your darkest hour…" he added, shaking his head sadly at Raphael's absent hands and ravaged campsite.

"I'll say." murmured Raphael "My camp's destroyed and my hands are gone. I need somebody to help fix them and also my sonic wave emitter." he gestured to his forehead apparatus "Do you know anybody who can sir?"

"I do indeed." said Ravage with a sinister smile on his cruel, sinister face "His name is Dr. Finitevus. He's the leader of the group I'm part of and he'll fix anything that needs fixing on you my cyber-husky friend. In return, he would like for you to join a group that he's formulating."

"Why me?" asked Raphael curiously.

"Because I told him about you and how you'd make a fine addition to the group." explained Ravage "You see, I've learnt much about the Cyber-Husky race and I know that you want to make everybody a cyborg for you believe it's for the greater good. If you join me and Finitevus then we and the rest of the people in the group will make that dream come true."

"Wow, that sounds awesome!" cried Raphael excitedly "Count me in! So what is this group called?"

"We call it the Dark Armada and it'll be the group that'll conquer all of Mobius and put its members above everybody else as ruler of the world…" said Ravage slyly with a toothy grin that made Raphael feel very proud indeed.

The Cyber-Husky could tell he was going to enjoy the Dark Armada very much and he was looking forward to getting revenge on Dark and Kiara and also making his dream come true. Dark and Kiara had beaten him but they would not beat him the next time he showed up…

Well...the Dark Armada has a new recruit. Will anybody else join Finitevus and his gang? Who knows?

That's it for this arc. Tune in next time for Roxy the Raccoon ends up as a "Raccoon on the Run" and in the care of Tails, Sora and Cosmo...

Before then, tune back into Heroes of Mobius for an "Other World Encounter"...

Raccoon on the Run 1

Arc 25: Raccoon on the Run

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 188-189

Part 1: Roxy in Danger

"OK, now I'm in one of Mobius's satellites…let's see if I can find the stolen Chaos Emerald." murmured Tails the Fox as he tapped on the computer keys and stared intently at the screen as if something magical was going to happen.

There was a lot of things going off for the Royal Fighters Service at this pressing time. After Sonic the Hedgehog, Sally Acorn, Silver the Hedgehog and Blaze the Cat had been sent to Solbius by Raphael the Cyber-Husky for a week*, Tails had taken a Chaos Emerald with him to go looking for the four. His search had come up empty for they had already made it back home themselves with Blaze's Sol Emeralds so Tails had returned to Mobius Prime…only to bring home Captain Metal as well. Captain Metal had proceeded to then steal the Chaos Emerald from Tails and run off with it**. While Captain Metal had ended up in the grasp of Dr. Finitevus and had joined the Dark Armada simply because he had managed to steal a Chaos Emerald, Tails didn't know this. He was trying to find out where the Chaos Emerald was and he had just the thing to find it. The Royal Fighters had access to Mobius's satellites since they could be trusted to use them for good things and Tails was now using a satellite to try and track down the Chaos Emerald. With its unique energy signature uncovered and unshielded, he'd find it easily. It'd be like finding a black sheep in a herd of white sheep. Tails waited as the screen loaded up the image of Mobius from a satellite point of view and he drummed his fingers on the keyboard patiently. The image fully loaded and Tails taped on some keys. He set the scanner in the satellite to pick up Chaos signatures. As he switched the setting, the image of Mobius on the screen turned a brilliant red colour and the words "Locating Chaos Signature"

appeared at the bottom of the screen. Cosmo the Seedrian, Tails's adorable girlfriend, peered curiously over the fox's shoulder. She watched the screen as Tails waited for it to find the Chaos Emerald. Luckily, it wouldn't pick up the other seven emeralds on AngelIsland since the tomb they were hidden in concealed their signature. It would only pick up the stolen green Chaos Emerald that Captain Metal had taken from him.

"Do you think this will help us find the Chaos Emerald?" asked Cosmo unsurely.

"I'd stake my life upon it." said Tails confidently "You see, this is a programme I developed myself and uploaded into Mobius's satellites to make finding lost Chaos Emeralds easier should we ever lose them. I tested it myself by hiding a Chaos Emerald in New Mobotropolis and the satellite located it instantly. Although it's taking longer to locate it this time, meaning it's a bit further than New Mobotropolis…"

"There's a green dot on the screen." interrupted Cosmo "I think it's found something."

Tails snapped out of his exposition mode and clicked back into reality. He really didn't like it when he ended up babbling away at random but it was something the little genius couldn't really help. Tails stared at the screen and saw that surely enough, a green dot was appearing on the screen. The screen also said the words "Chaos Energy Signature Detected" at the bottom and was displaying a set of coordinates. Tails read them and realized that the coordinates coalesced with the location of Megapolis. That struck Tails was very coincidental since his sister had taken Amy Rose and Cream the Rabbit to Megapolis to destroy a Death Egg refuelling station. Maybe after they'd destroyed the station, Tails could request for them to join him and Cosmo in finding the Chaos Emerald. Unless they already find it beforehand that is. Tails kept the coordinates mapped out in his brainy little head and he turned around to face Cosmo.

"It's in Megapolis." explained Tails "I wonder what made that Metal Sonic-pirate-thing go there? Is he looking for Blaze there?"

"Maybe since apparently, he's out for revenge against her." murmured Cosmo "But he won't find her there…she's in Chun-Nan with Sonic, Silver and Ruben."

"So he's way off course in that case." said Tails "Captain Metal's on a wild goose chase. Thankfully, that makes looking for the Chaos Emerald much easier for us."

He got up with his seat and he put his hands on Cosmo's shoulder. Cosmo looked back into her boyfriends sky-blue eyes. Whenever she looked into those eyes, she always felt warm and loved no matter what mood she was in.

"Now Cosmo, this might be a very dangerous mission and I want you to be very careful." said Tails concernedly "I don't want you to get hurt whilst on this mission."

"I don't want you to get hurt either." said Cosmo, putting her hands on Tails's furry chest "That's why I wanted to come with you. Please though, don't worry too much about me."

"I won't Cosmo but it'll be hard for me." said Tails, his hands sliding down Cosmo's shoulder and around her waist and pulling her close "I'm sorry but ever since…that horrible day on Mobius Beta***, I'm very concerned for my friend's well-being…especially you my dear Cosmo. You mean the world to me and I don't want anything bad to happen to you."

"Tails…have I ever told you how sweet you are?" said Cosmo in awe, her hands lightly touching the fox's face tenderly.

"You have Cosmo, very much." beamed Tails "And all because you're such a lovely girl Cosmo."

The two embraced and then kissed tenderly for a moment. Had they not got a mission to do, Tails would easily keep this up for as long as he needed. As is, they kept it up for a short minute before breaking up. They still held each other though.

"So, got your weapon Cosmo?" asked Tails.

"I always have." said Cosmo happily "I could never go without it my

sweet little fox. It was a gift from you to me, I have to have it on me full time."

"Good point." said Tails "OK then Cosmo, let's get that Chaos Emerald back!"

"Yes, let's." beamed Cosmo excitedly.

If there was one thing that Cosmo loved, it was going on an adventure with her darling boyfriend. Being with Tails made the adventure all the more enjoyable for her. Tails grabbed a small, electronic device that was rectangular in shape and had two metal prongs protruding from the top of it. This was a device he would use to detect the Chaos Emerald whilst in Megapolis. It would be very useful for him indeed. Tails and Cosmo ran outside of Royal HQ and Tails quickly boarded a hover saucer, the only one remaining after the rest had been taken by the other fighters to go out into the world to destroy Death Egg refuelling stations. Tails started up the saucer and he set it into first gear. The saucer levitated above the ground and zoomed off out of New Mobotropolis and off towards Megapolis. Tails could already imagine Sora, Amy and Cream in Megapolis destroying the Death Egg refuelling station that was stationed there as he steered the saucer through the meadow and towards the Great Forest. He and Cosmo were there to find a Chaos Emerald rather than destroy a station but they would see if Sora, Amy and Cream would like to aid them in their search should it come to that. Tails just hoped the Chaos Emerald wouldn't be gone by the time they arrived at Megapolis…

Meanwhile in Megapolis, there were three Mobians that Tails and Cosmo would NOT be happy at all to meet again. Team Diamond had returned to Megapolis once again and they had their eyes set on the Golden Caverns, a very popular tourist attraction in Megapolis. They had been in Megapolis and had tried raiding the caverns once only to be defeated by Sonic the Hedgehog, Tails the Fox, Dark Cat the Leo-Lynx and Kiara the Cheetah****. Roxy the Raccoon had betrayed them but Sonic had covered up her betrayal by saying she had actually died in a cave-in during the battle. Lennox Meers, the leader of Team Diamond, had fallen for the lie

and had retreated due to his team's numbers being decreased. Not to mention Roxy's "death" had been quite hard on him. He had found her to be a very valuable member of the team and had even somewhat grown a fondness for her. Not surprising considering Roxy was a very beautiful woman and it would be hard for any man not to find her attractive. Ever since Roxy had "died", Lennox hadn't been the same anymore. He'd been much more cold, distant and sheltered and it had taken him a while to decide it was time for another mission. This was the first time since his last outing with Sonic that he had gone on a treasure hunt. He was now arriving at the Golden Caverns with Owen Pounder and Alistair Drakken behind him. They were pleased to see that their leader was getting back into the spirit of things. They had missed going on treasure hunts during his period of mourning and now they were getting back into the swing of things. After all, H.U.N.T. had been terminated thanks to Sora Prower's interventions***** and they needed to keep their organization's spirit alive by raiding treasures. The treasures they raided would hopefully tempt any treasure lovers into joining them and then they would reform H.U.N.T. and begin looking for treasures the world over. Lennox, Owen and Alistair crept towards the entrance to the Golden Caverns as quietly as they could. Lennox stopped by the entrance and he held up a hand. A signal for stop. Owen and Alistair knew better then to ignore such an important hand signal. They stood by and waited as Lennox observed the entrance. He was presumably seeing that the cost was clear before going in. He peered around the side to see the entrance of the cave. It was very dark inside and the path led down into the depths of the caverns. Things seemed to be clear. Lennox turned to face his comrades.

"Coast seems to be clear." murmured Lennox "But I'll go in first. You two stand guard. If anybody comes near the caverns, kill them without hesitation."

"Sure thing." said Owen with a wicked smile on his face "We'll make sure nobody gets near this cave."

"You'd better otherwise I'll put a bullet in your heads, both of you!" snarled Lennox "We can't afford to have anybody screwing this mission up for us."

"We know Lennox." growled Alistair in his usual trademark, growling voice "After what happened last time, we can't afford another humiliation. Plus we lost Roxy, we can't lose anybody else on this team."

"If I lose you two, then Team Diamond is nothing." said Lennox grimly "We'll never reincarnate H.U.N.T. if we're gone. True the other teams might break out of prison and try to reform the organization but we all know how useful THEY are."

"Compared to us, the other teams were amateurs." sniffed Owen "We can't rely on them to try and reform H.U.N.T. can we? No, we're H.U.N.T.'s only hope if it's ever to come back together."

"Indeed and in order to goad any potential treasure hunters into joining us…we need those golden nuggets." declared Lennox "They'll have any treasure-hunter killing themselves over to get. Also, it's what Roxy would have wanted."

"Indeed." purred Alistair "In the name of our femme fetale member, we shall bring H.U.N.T. back up onto its feet!"

"Roxy would be very happy to hear that." said Lennox, smiling dryly at the bat "Now wait here. I'll let you know if I need you two to come in as well."

Alistair and Owen did as they were told and they stood by, waiting for Lennox to return. Their patience was commendable. They could wait for hours, maybe even days until Lennox called on them. Cautiously, Lennox slipped a revolver out of his cloak and clocked it. He walked into the cave with his weapon in hand, keeping a cautious eye out for any sign of danger. The meerkat was like meerkats on Earth, always vigilant and with all senses primed and alert. Treasure-hunting was no exception when Lennox's vigilance kicked in. He looked in all directions and kept his ears twitching for any possible sounds. His nose twitched, searching for the scent of danger. There seemed to be no danger for the moment. Satisfied but still alert, Lennox pressed on into the cave. It surprised him how the darkness of the cave wasn't all that much. Then again, there was a big beam of light coming in from up above and there were the golden nuggets that awaited him at the bottom of his descent that

shed some light in the cave. Lennox wondered if the golden nuggets might be still there from their last encounter with Sonic. If so then his job would be made much easier. Lennox reached the bottom of the sloped path that took him down into the cave and he turned to his left to see a tunnel that led to a large open area of the cave. This was where he'd found the golden nuggets. He was just walking towards the room when suddenly; he heard something that made him hesitate. It was a loud noise. Not just any loud noise though but…a metallic sound. The sound of metal bashing against rocks. He heard the familiar clunk noise of a pickaxe hitting rock. Somebody was here and somebody was digging up the golden nuggets! Lennox swore under his breath and he kept his gun handy. He edged slowly towards the entrance to the room and pressed himself against the wall. He stood by and waited as the noises grew louder. He could hear the person using the pickaxe grunting in effort. A *female* person. Lennox wondered if he could recruit this woman into Team Diamond. She wouldn't replace Roxy but she'd be better than nothing. Lennox always believed it was good to have a woman on your team after all. That's why he'd recruited Rouge, Fiona and of course, Roxy. Lennox still waited to see what the woman's business was before making himself known. The picking stopped and the woman spoke.

"Whew! This is hard work! It'll be worth it though for I'll be rich and I can get my life back on the line." said the woman "It was a mistake ever joining H.U.N.T. and now Lennox thinks I'm dead, I'm free to have my own life again. Maybe I'll return to my acting career and this time, manage my budget well."

Lennox almost fainted in shock. His heart skipped a beat and his legs felt wobbly. The voice belonged to Roxy! Roxy the Raccoon was in the Golden Caverns and mining up the golden nuggets! Lennox was quite happy that Roxy was alive. But what she had said was like a knife through his heart. Roxy considering joining H.U.N.T. a mistake?! She wanted to be free again and was content at Lennox thinking she was dead? And she wanted to return to her old life?! Lennox couldn't understand it. This wasn't the Roxy that had walked into his office and asked to join H.U.N.T.! It couldn't be Roxy! He had to be imagining it! Maybe he was hallucinating because of how much he missed her! Lennox peeked around the corner and saw a

purple furred raccoon in a black bodysuit with red hair, swinging a pickaxe at the wall and breaking golden nuggets out of it. She then loaded the nuggets into a hovering trolley that she had managed to buy. She had taken a smaller nugget to use to buy the trolley so she could carry away the bigger nuggets. Lennox eyed the raccoon and saw the familiar smirk on her pretty face, the familiar way she walked and the familiar bout of strength she displayed when carrying the nuggets. It was no hallucination. It definitely was Roxy the Raccoon. Roxy carried a nugget onto the trolley and she puffed exhaustedly, wiping sweat off her head.

"I bet with all these nuggets, I'll be one of the richest Mobians in the world." Roxy thought to herself "But I won't take all the money. Oh no, that'd be selfish of me and selfish is something I've had enough of being. Some poor people might enjoy these nuggets too. I'll keep most of them of course but I can easily spare a few for the homeless and the needy."

That made Lennox's stomach churn. Roxy had definitely changed quite considerably since he'd last met her. Now she was thinking about giving some of the nuggets away to the poor people?! Lennox had made it quite clear that the only people who deserve the treasures are those who find them, i.e. H.U.N.T.'s treasure hunting teams. This couldn't be Roxy! It had to be an impostor posing as her! But who'd want to pretend to be Roxy? And if this was an impostor, why is she getting Roxy's character so wrong? Maybe she'd slip into character the moment she came across Team Diamond, maybe that's why she wasn't in character. Lennox had to find out once and for all who this was. He raised his revolver, breathed in deeply, and he emerged from his hiding place.

"Put your hands up!" snarled Lennox, pointing the revolver at the back of Roxy's head.

Roxy's blood froze and the raccoon put her hands up instantly. She knew that voice all too well. Much too well for her liking. Roxy turned around and faced Lennox, horrified at the fact it was him she was looking at right now. The raccoon almost felt like collapsing but she was too horrified to faint. She shook furiously as she saw that Lennox was pointing a gun at her.

"L-L-Lennox?!" she shrieked "W-w-w-what are you d-doing here?!"

"Oh the usual business Roxy…treasure hunting." sniffed Lennox "What are you doing here my dear? Oh no need to tell me, I heard it all. You were planning on using those nuggets to make yourself wealthy so you could return to your old life. That's lovely and all. Pity you forgot about the fact that you're part of Team Diamond and you weren't given permission to quit the team!"

"L-Lennox please, I-I-I c-can explain…" faltered Roxy, stepping backwards as Lennox advanced on her, gun pointed directly at her.

"I sure hope you can Roxy because I'm wondering if you're the Roxy I actually recruited in my team or an impostor posing as her!" growled Lennox "Your sudden change in character is astonishing!"

"Th-that's th-the p-point." lied Roxy "I-I'm working u-undercover. You see? I c-c-came up with a p-plan to strike back at Sonic. I p-pretended to b-be d-dead so that he w-wouldn't suspect anything and…"

"You're lying." said Lennox coldly "You're stammering and you sound very nervous. Tell me the truth or I'll be forced to beat you quite badly!"

Roxy suddenly found herself pressed firmly against the wall and sandwiched between the wall and Lennox. The raccoon was frightened now. She was trapped and had nowhere to run! Heart pounding and head sweating, Roxy gulped and then spoke.

"OK…you want the truth?" asked Roxy "Then here it is…I have relinquished my ties with your crackpot team. Ever since I joined H.U.N.T. I actually HATED every moment I spent with you horrible boys! So violent and so needlessly cruel! I only stuck with you lot because I needed money! Once I'd gotten enough, I was going to cut my losses and ditch you three! While I did somewhat enjoy stealing the treasures, it was being on the run, chased, shot at and all the needless killing that I didn't like! I've been plotting to abandon you all since day one and thankfully, Sonic gave me that chance! He took me into the caverns can came up with the idea to fake my death by lying about me, saying I got caught in a cave-in. Now you

were fooled, I was free to do what I liked without you breathing down my neck! Unlike you, you monster in meerkat's clothing, I want to return to my old life! And this time, correct the mistakes I made that led to this!"

Lennox was so stunned at what he'd heard that he nearly dropped his revolver. He was still convinced that this wasn't the real Roxy but then again, this couldn't be an impostor posing as her. She knew way too much to be a fake Roxy. This was definitely the real Roxy the Raccoon. Lennox had a twinge of hope that this was just an act though. Roxy had once been an actress so she was good at deception.

"Roxy…please…please tell me this is an act." stammered Lennox.

"You wish." snorted Roxy "This is no act. I'm being 100% honest with you."

"But Roxy! I thought you loved your time with us!" protested Lennox.

"THAT was an act!" retorted Roxy "Secretly, I was plotting to just disappear from your life and I nearly damn well succeeded too! But no, you just had to come in and spoil all that you stupid, trigger-happy moron!"

Lennox really did feel like he wanted to collapse now but was too shocked and angry to do so. He kept the revolver pointed at Roxy though.

"If you hated us that much, why didn't you just ask to leave?" asked Lennox.

"And let you wipe my memory? No chance." scoffed Roxy "No, the best way to leave was to make you all think I was dead. I want to keep my memories so that I can remember you all for what you were…slimy, lying, cheating, murderous, two-timing scoundrels that deserve to be locked up forever! My memories of my time in H.U.N.T. will do me some good, for they'll make me remember what I've been through in order to get my happy ending. Plus, with memories of you three intact, I could tip you off to the cops any time I liked! So that's why I didn't "just ask".

Lennox fought hard to keep himself composed as his anger started welling up.

"But…Roxy. You were a great asset to my team." said Lennox feebly "Why…I even…loved you."

Roxy felt sick hearing Lennox say this. Her face twisted in disgust.

"Don't you dare lie to me!" snarled Roxy "You didn't love me! You kept abusing me and using me as a punching bag once things went wrong! You only love yourself and your work Lennox! Well guess what? This girl isn't taking crap from you anymore and I will see to it that you all get incarcerated!"

Lennox couldn't believe what he was hearing. Roxy thought he was lying to her about the fact he loved her? And she was going to see to it that he, Owen and Alistair were thrown back in prison…after all they'd done for her? Roxy had definitely changed and Lennox didn't like it. The meerkat glared at Roxy with eyes that looked empty and distant. Roxy looked nervous. She wondered what Lennox was going to do next although she had a nasty feeling she already knew. Lennox breathed in deeply and then spoke.

"Roxy, you've managed to do something that nobody else in the world has ever managed…you've broken my heart." murmured Lennox "And for that, I cannot let you live. Especially since you betrayed us too."

He raised the revolver and he pressed it firmly into Roxy's forehead. The raccoon looked up at the barrel of the revolver in terror. The first thing she did was to start begging for mercy.

"No! Lennox please! I'm sorry! I'm sorry for what I said and did! Please let me live! Give me one more chance! I'll come back to you! Please! I BEG OF YOU!" she screamed. Her eyes were welling up with tears.

"You will not device me anymore Roxy." growled Lennox "That's all you've ever done while you've been on this team."

Roxy burst into tears and she closed her eyes, waiting for the bullet

that would embed itself into her brain to finish her off. She sobbed loudly as Lennox pulled back the hammer on his revolver and curled his finger around the trigger. He was about to pull it and send the bullet that occupied the revolver down through the barrel into Roxy's head. It was as simple as that. Roxy would be finished and her treachery would end. Lennox gritted his teeth and he tightened his finger on the trigger. Roxy continued to sob, her life flashing before her closed eyes. But the bullet she expected to feel smashing through her skull and into her brain never came. Lennox did the one thing he never, EVER did before in his life. He actually lowered the revolver and threw it onto the ground! The meerkat looked ashamed of himself and he put his hands on Roxy's shoulders. The weeping raccoon opened her eyes and was surprised to see that the revolver was gone and a very sad looking Lennox was staring into her eyes. What was going on now?

"No…I couldn't kill you Roxy." said Lennox "I'd never forgive myself if I did. I really do love you Roxy. That's why I can't kill you."

"Sniff…you really mean that?" snivelled Roxy.

"Definitely." said Lennox softly, trailing his hands down to Roxy's hips and pulling her close "I will admit that the way I treated you was wrong but the fact that another woman had betrayed me in the past was what made me a little…physical towards you Roxy. But if you really hated that then I'll treat you much better. Come back to us and we'll treat you better than you ever have been before."

"Will you change your ways and be less violent?" asked Roxy "No more killing needlessly?"

"Anything you want." said Lennox "I just…I just want you back on the team my dear Roxy. Please…will you come back?"

"Oh Lennox…" purred Roxy in a rather seductive tone of voice.

She pulled Lennox close to her and then surprised the meerkat by kissing him on the lips. Lennox returned the kiss and hugged Roxy lovingly. Little did he realize was that this was once again, an act. Roxy was very good at deceiving after all. Roxy didn't believe Lennox for a minute and how right she was for Lennox was actually

trying to manipulate Roxy into coming back to Team Diamond. That was the only reason he spared her life. Roxy knew Lennox too well to trust him. Lennox was a bigger liar and deceiver than even she was and he didn't even have an acting career to back it up. As Roxy kissed Lennox, she slid her hand behind her back and grabbed her trademark black baton. She took it off and broke up the kiss with Lennox. Before Lennox could do anything, Roxy walloped him around the head with the bat and knocked him clean out. The meerkat collapsed onto the floor and Roxy sneered at him.

"You will not device me again Lennox." she growled "That's all you've been doing your whole life…"

Brushing her hair aside, Roxy put the bat back onto her back and she ran for her life. She couldn't stay here any longer, she needed to get away and fast. If Lennox was here than Alistair and Owen would be too and if they found her, they'd be after her like wolves chasing a deer. Roxy also knew that she'd be slowed down if she took the golden nuggets with her. Like it or not, she had to leave them behind. Gritting her teeth, Roxy took one last look at the knocked out Lennox and she ran as fast as her legs would let her. Owen and Alistair would be in for a surprise when they realized that she of all people had managed to take out Lennox Meers with one blow to the head from her bat. Lennox was one of the last people who ever got knocked out by anybody. Being one of the few to get the drop on him was an honour to Roxy. The raccoon scampered on up out of the cave and dashed past Owen and Alistair. She didn't even notice them she was running that fast. I'm not sure if she even realized that they were by the cave entrance as she left the cave. Roxy ran on, leaving a very bewildered Owen and Alistair to stare incredulously at her as she ran away.

"Hey! Is that Roxy?" asked Owen "It can't be! Sonic told us she was dead!"

"Maybe the hedgehog exaggerated about her well-being to fool us..." mused Alistair "I'll catch her and see if it is indeed Roxy."

Flapping his wings, Alistair took to the skies and flew after the raccoon. Roxy maybe the fastest member of Team Diamond on land but in the air, Alistair could fly rings around her, Lennox and Owen.

Alistair had only just taken to the air and already he'd cleared half of the distance between him and Roxy. Roxy could hear Alistair flying after her and she instantly grew worried. Had he realized what had happened and was now trying to kill her? Roxy wasn't going to let Alistair kill her just like she didn't let Lennox have the chance. She skidded to a halt and waited for Alistair to come to her. The bat didn't suspect a thing. He'd assumed Roxy had seen him and was waiting to greet him. She was...just not in the way that one usually considers "greeting". Alistair descended from the sky and suddenly realized that Roxy had whipped out her baton. Before he could do anything to stop himself, Roxy walloped him in the face with her baton, knocking him down onto the ground. Alistair picked himself up only for Roxy to hammer him in the visor with the baton. She'd cracked the visor so now Alistair couldn't see properly. Grinning, Roxy whacked Alistair on the head and knocked him out. Now she was in the clear, Roxy ran on and left Alistair lying unconscious on the ground. Despite the long distance, Owen had managed to see what had happened. Not very clearly though but he did see Alistair had been knocked out. He ran over to Alistair, ignoring the fleeing Roxy, and he knelt down beside the knocked out bat. He slapped Alistair on the face a couple of times and shook him. Maybe a little too hard for the bat woke up and started clutching his neck as if it was throbbing wildly. That's because it was throbbing wildly after Owen shook him so much.

"Hey Alistair! You OK? What happened to you?" asked Owen.

"Oooooh, why did you have to shake me so hard…?" slurred Alistair, trying to collect his thoughts and regain himself.

"You look like you had a rough landing pal." said Owen, notifying Alistair's cracked visor "What happened?"

"Roxy attacked me!" blurted Alistair wildly "I was heading towards her and then she whacked me down onto the ground with her bat! She proceeded to break my visor and knock me out too!"

"What?! Why would Roxy attack us?!" cried Owen in amazement "That's outrageous! We're her friends! Why would she do that to you?!"

"I have no idea…" mused Alistair crossly "But I know one thing, Roxy's definitely different now. Either it's a fake Roxy…or she's betrayed us."

"We'll have to tell Lennox about this." said Owen "Roxy came out of the cave, Lennox must have seen her. Maybe he knows what's going on."

Before they did anything, Alistair proceeded to fully break his visor so he could see properly. The cracked visor would be a hindrance to him so it was better to go without a visor for now. With the visor broken, Owen got to see for the first time what Alistair's eyes looked like under the visor. He had horrible, pink eyeballs with red pupils in the centre that were continuously bloodshot looking. Owen had to admit, he preferred Alistair when he didn't know what his eyes looked like under the visor. Now Alistair could see properly, he and Owen ran off back to the Golden Caverns. Upon arrival, they darted down into the cave and ran all the way through to the room with the golden nuggets. They were very much surprised to see a knocked-out Lennox Meers lying on the ground with his revolver lying a few feet away from him. Owen picked it up and sniffed it. It hadn't been fired. That told him that Lennox didn't even have chance to whip out his revolver and shoot his attacker, very unusual considering his tendency to have his guns drawn before the attack can even so much as blink at him. Alistair turned Lennox over onto his back and shook him slightly. The meerkat came to and he sat up, taking his hat off and massaging his scalp tenderly. It was aching like mad in his head. Almost like a hammer was banging against his brain repeatedly and refused to stop.

"Oooooh…so that's what it feels like to get hit by Roxy's bat…" Lennox slurred almost drunkenly to himself.

"Lennox! Who did this to you?!" asked Alistair frantically "Who knocked you out?!"

"You'll never believe this but…Roxy did." explained Lennox "She has turned traitor. Apparently she faked being dead all along just to escape us and now she wants to return to her old life and get us put back in jail."

"WHAT?!" bellowed Owen "That's disgusting! How could that bitch betray us like this?!"

"She did not approve of our "Overly violent methods" to put it bluntly." muttered Lennox "Well I'm not letting Roxy get away with this. When I get my hands on her, she's dead. I should have killed her when I had the chance but I decided to try and manipulate her back into the team. She's more clever than I thought though for she didn't fall for it."

"Pity." muttered Owen "I can promise you now, when I get my hands on Roxy her head will be crushed like a stone!"

"At this point, I don't care how Roxy dies as long as it happens." muttered Lennox coldly "She doesn't deserve to life after this treachery. She even refused my love for her. That cannot go unanswered. You two, we're abandoning the mission for now. Our primary objective, kill Roxy the Raccoon!"

Owen and Alistair seemed disturbingly happy about the idea of killing Roxy. Maybe it was because they hadn't really been too fond of her during her time with them. Lennox was more on the lines of "Sorry Roxy but you've given me no choice" as he was picturing the raccoon's appropriate demise. Now they had a mission in mind, Team Diamond left the Golden Caverns and began searching for the runaway Roxy. Emerging from within the depths of the cave, they ran straight on ahead with Alistair flying ahead for he knew that was the direction Roxy had headed in earlier. Once they caught up to her, she would be dead meat. She'd be sorry she ever betrayed them when they'd finished with her. Only…she wouldn't be alive to feel as such…

"For goodness sake, the Chaos Emerald won't stop moving will it?!" sighed Tails crossly as he glanced at his Chaos Detector for the millionth time "I was sure we were getting close to it and now we stop to look for it, it's moving away again!"

Tails and Cosmo's mission to find the Chaos Emerald had not been going well at all. They had arrived at Megapolis without so much as

a problem but upon arriving at Megapolis, they had been having a bit of trouble locating the Chaos Emerald. The Chaos Emerald appeared to be continuously moving around the moment Tails and Cosmo got near to it. It was almost like the hover-saucer was repelling the Chaos Emerald for some weird reason. That instantly made Tails think of magnets and how opposite sides of the magnet attract but the same sides repel. It was feeling like that at the moment now only with a hover-saucer and a Chaos Emerald. There was a moment where the hover-saucer had very nearly reached the Chaos Emerald but then it had started moving again just as Tails arrived at where the detector was telling him the Chaos Emerald was. Tails wondered if Captain Metal somehow knew somebody was trying to find him and thus he kept moving on to avoid being caught. Tails scratched his head in thought. How would he be able to catch the Chaos Emerald if it kept moving? He had no idea but he was determined to chase down Captain Metal and get back the Chaos Emerald. He continued making the hover-saucer move through the terrain of Megapolis, eyeing his Chaos Detector to see how close they were to the Chaos Emerald. Dust whipped up into the air as the hover-saucer sped through the plains.

"Why do you think the Chaos Emerald keeps moving?" asked Cosmo, trying to be heard over the sound of the hover-saucer's whirring engine.

"I think Captain Metal somehow knows we're after him so he keeps running off before we can catch him!" Tails shouted back "Or he's just playing with it like some kind of toy and keeps using a Chaos Control for no real reason! I really don't know why it's moving but we'll catch up to it eventually!"

"I hope so!" Cosmo called back "I'm really worried on what Captain Metal's going to do with the Chaos Emerald now he's got it. What if Dr. Eggman finds him and steals it? Or even Dr. Finitevus for that matter?"

"Cosmo, that is an excellent point." said Tails thoughtfully "What if either of those two catch him and steal it? If they get the Chaos Emerald, the results could be disastrous! We need to get it back now for if we're able to detect the emerald's presence, so will the two doctors! I bet they've already detected it and are on their way to

get the emerald now…"

"Tails, look out!" shrieked Cosmo, pointing ahead of the saucer frantically as if trying to stab the air with her finger.

Tails looked ahead of himself and he floored the brakes so hard that his feet nearly broke through the pedal board. Tails himself was amazed that the brakes were still intact after slamming on them so hard. The hover-saucer ground to a halt, throwing dust ahead of itself and earning a cough in return. Somebody had wondered into the path of the speeding saucer and had very nearly gotten run over. Tails had managed to stop just in time and had just resulted in getting the person who had stepped in front of them very dusty. The person was Roxy the Raccoon. She had stopped to catch her breath after fleeing Team Diamond's clutches and nearly got run over by Tails and Cosmo. Thankfully, she only ended up getting dusty from the hover-saucer throwing dust over her. Roxy wiped the dust off and coughed loudly. Cosmo stared incredulously at Roxy, clearly shocked to see her again. She hadn't seen Roxy since Team Diamond's team-up with the late Lola Gunn to assassinate Sonic the Hedgehog****** and yet she was staring at her right now.

"Roxy?!" she cried alarmingly "Oh no…not her again! If she's here then Team Diamond must be close behind!"

"No Cosmo, Roxy betrayed Team Diamond apparently." explained Tails "Sonic told me she double-crossed them and had Sonic pretend that she was dead to scare the team off. I wonder why she's here? It seems awfully coincidental to run into her whilst looking for a Chaos Emerald…"

Tails decided to ask Roxy what was going on so he stepped out of the hover-saucer and politely offered a hand for Roxy to shake.

"Hello Roxy." said Tails "It's quite surprising to see you again ma'am. What brings you here?"

"Tails! Thank god I ran into a Royal Fighter!" cried Roxy frantically "Tails, you gotta help me! I'm in big trouble right now!"

She grabbed Tails and picked him up, holding him up to her eye

line. Tails could see that Roxy looked very distressed and nervous right now. He could even hear her heart thumping like crazy but that might be because foxes have an abnormally strong sense of hearing.

"What's the matter?" asked Tails.

"Isn't that the big question?!" screeched Roxy "Team Diamond have found out that I betrayed them and now they're coming after me, trying to kill me! Please, you gotta help me! I don't want them to kill me! Please, can I join you Royal Fighters so that I've got some protection from those demons?! Please?!"

Tails was shocked to hear what Roxy had said to him. Team Diamond had discovered they had been gypped?! And now Roxy was on the run from them? He had to do something to help her! Tails then though about something. Roxy was good at treasure-hunting. Maybe she'd be well-suited for helping him and Cosmo find the Chaos Emerald? She'd be safe in their care and Team Diamond would never catch up to her while they were on a hover-saucer. Tails put his hands on Roxy's shoulders.

"We'll help you." said Tails kindly "You can come with us. We're trying to find a stolen Chaos Emerald and we'd be happy to let you come with us on the mission. You'll be safe with us and once we've found the Chaos Emerald, we'll deliver you to New Mobotropolis and let you live with us. Team Diamond will never get you then."

"Oh thank you, thank you, thank you!" squealed Roxy, hugging Tails so hard that the fox thought his head was going to pop off "You have no idea how grateful I am for your kindness! How can I ever repay you?"

"How about putting me down and not squeezing me so hard?!" spluttered Tails feebly.

Roxy giggled nervously and she put Tails down. Tails caught his breath back and he hopped back into the hover-saucer. Roxy sat down beside Cosmo and made herself comfortable. Cosmo felt a little uneasy having a former villain sitting with her but she was much too polite to make a comment about it. Instead she accepted what

was happening and let Roxy make herself comfortable. Cosmo turned to Roxy.

"So Roxy…what made you betray Team Diamond?" she asked quizzically.

"Oh many reasons sweetheart." said Roxy grimly "Lennox, Owen and Alistair are all ugly mugs, their love of killing is sick and their way of life was just…horrible!" she shuddered as if an icy hand had gripped her from behind "I couldn't stand it anymore! I was in it to get some money but I didn't want to get it in THAT way! I only stuck with Team Diamond because I was desperate and I was a little too scared to say anything to Lennox. Thankfully, Sonic inspired me to finally decide to cut my losses and ditch them so I did so and he helped by lying to them that I was dead. Sadly…they found me in the Golden Caverns and now I'm a fugitive in their eyes."

"That is terrible and I promise you Roxy, we will protect you from Team Diamond." said Cosmo, putting a hand on Roxy's arm and giving her a sympathetic expression that reflected her words "That's a promise me and Tails intend to keep."

"You kids are wonderful." beamed Roxy, hugging Cosmo like how a big sister would hug her little sister "Thank you so much. It's funny how you're only children and yet you're much nicer than Lennox, Owen and Alistair!"

"I guess we were lucky enough to be amongst the good people." suggested Tails "And luckily for you Roxy, you're now in the care of very good people. When you come home to New Mobotropolis, you'll be amongst even more good people."

"I can hardly wait." said Roxy with an excited grin on her face "You know, I should have joined the Royal Fighters in the first place. Maybe this wouldn't be happening if I had done…"

"Well you can join us now Roxy." said Tails brightly "I bet Sonic will be pleasantly surprised indeed to hear this."

"I bet he will." laughed Roxy "But he'll understand my reasons of course. After all, he was the first one to hear of my disdain for Team

Diamond and even helped contribute in my betrayal."

Tails smiled and he started up the hover-saucer. The hover-saucer levitated up off the ground and Tails set it forward. The saucer flew off and Tails peered at his Chaos Detector. The device was telling him that the Chaos Emerald was on the move and heading in the west direction. Hopefully they'd finally catch up with the emerald and get it back from Captain Metal. Tails could already see Captain Metal's face when he snatched the Chaos Emerald back from him…

Meanwhile, the Megapolis refuelling station was busy with activity. The Megapolis refuelling station was a huge facility with an appearance that more looked like a giant fortress than a tower, very different to the other stations that Eggman had built for his Death Egg. This refuelling station had a landing pad for the Death Egg to land on and some pipes that would attach to the ship and refuel it. There were cannons on the station too, presumably for defence against anybody that dared to attack the station. The station also had the usual colours of red, gold and white, the familiar colour scheme of Dr. Eggman. There were many Egg-Pawns out on guard, ready to protect that station from anything that would wish to attack it. The Egg-Pawns were all armed with rocket launchers and they were ready to pull the triggers to their launchers if anybody so much as coughed loudly. All this had been observed by the super-spy vixen Sora Prower from her hi-tech binoculars that she peered through. Sora had found the station at last and was lying down on a rock looking through her binoculars and observing the refuelling station. The great size of the station had been enough to take her by surprise for she had been expecting another tower. It looked more like an army base than a refuelling station. She lowered the binoculars and looked over her shoulder at Amy Rose and Cream the Rabbit. They had come with her on this mission and were waiting for a plan of attack.

"Well girls, it looks like this station's very heavily armoured and has many guards on patrol." explained Sora "They're armed with rocket launchers and they look pretty darn trigger happy."

"We'll just smash them up like we always do!" declared Amy

"Eggman's robots never fare well against us, you know that!"

"But Miss Rose, they have rocket launchers." squeaked Cream nervously "Those things are dangerous you know. We could get seriously hurt."

"Cream, we've been getting seriously hurt more times than I can count, this is nothing new you know." said Amy confidently "But you're right, we'd best make sure those rockets don't come flying our way."

"At the most, we trick them into shooting each other." suggested Sora "That'll be lots of fun. Now here's the plan: we get a rocket launcher each from those Egg-Pawns. We use them to punch holes into the station and once we've done that, I'll insert the bombs I took with me on this mission into the station."

"Will they blow it up?" asked Amy.

"Trust me Amy, just ONE of those bombs could destroy an entire five-storey house." gloated Sora "I have three on me. They'll destroy at least most of the building, if not all of it."

"Awesome!" squealed Amy "When do we start the plan?"

"When I feel that the coast is clear enough." explained Sora "Standby for the moment please."

Amy did as she was told and she waited for Sora to give her the signal. Sora picked up the binoculars again and watched intently as the Egg-Pawns were guarding the station and keeping their optics open for any sign of danger. As she spied on the Egg-Pawns, she failed to realize that she herself was being spied on. Dr. Finitevus was standing atop a cliff that loomed up behind her and he was watching her closely. He had come to Megapolis for he suspected he'd find Team Diamond there and instead had found Sora, Amy and Cream spying on a refuelling station and planning to attack it. Finitevus grinned wickedly to himself as an evil plan formed in his head.

"My plans maybe great but it never hurts to get rid of a few of

Sonic's pathetic friends…" he mused "I'll give the Egg-Pawns a bit of a hint that they're being watched…"

With that said, he picked up a stone about the size of his eyes and he threw it at Sora's head with precise accuracy and coordination. The stone hit Sora, prompting the vixen to yelp in pain.

"OUCH!" she squealed, rubbing the back of her head vigorously "Who did that?!"

Amy and Cream looked up only to see nothing up on the cliff. Maybe the stone had fallen off and hit Sora by accident. It was going to be a fatal accident if that was the case for the Egg-Pawns had heard Sora and they aimed their rocket launchers at her, Amy and Cream. If the girls didn't make a move now, they would be bombarded by rockets and the mission would be a complete failure. Finitevus watched, eager to see Sora, Amy and Cream get reduced to cinders…

Footnotes:

***It only just happened in *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 185-187**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 188**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 167**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 157-158**

******* See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 137-138**

******** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 68-69**

Roxy's on the run, Team Diamond are hungry for revenge and Sora, Amy and Cream are about to be blasted! How will our heroes get out of this one? Tune into Part 2 for things get really

intense next time and the ending will leave you speechless...

Raccoon on the Run 2

Arc 25: Raccoon on the Run

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 188-189

Part 2: Station Stand-Off

"Sora! I think we've been spotted!" shrieked Amy Rose frantically, pointing ahead of herself in fright as if a zombie had risen out of its grave to come and eat the girls alive.

They had planned their mission so carefully. Sora Prower, Amy Rose and Cream the Rabbit had chosen to come to Megapolis to deal with a Death Egg refuelling station that had been built there. The girls had spied on the station from afar and were planning to ambush it. Sora had planned the perfect way to bring the station down. She had three powerful bombs on her and was going to use them to blow up the station. First they would have to break into the station. Sora had planned on that too. The Egg-Pawns that were on patrol all around the enormous refuelling station were armed with rocket launchers and Sora had the idea that if they could steal a rocket launcher from the Egg-Pawns, they'd be able to break into the station. It all seemed very straight forward and a plan that couldn't possibly go wrong. But even the best laid plans can blow up in your face as they say and it seemed now that it was going to be a VERY literal case of that saying. Dr. Finitevus had arrived on the scene just up on a cliff above the girls and he'd thrown a stone at Sora's head. The resulting hit had caused Sora to yelp in pain and accidentally give away her position along with Amy and Cream. The Egg-Pawns had spotted the girls and now they were aiming their rocket launchers at the girls. The girls weren't exactly close but the Egg-Pawns could still see them from where they were and they took aim. Sora stopped rubbing her head better long enough to see that indeed the Egg-Pawns had spotted her, Amy and Cream and were preparing to shoot them. Panicking, Sora leaped up onto her feet and ran for it. Amy and Cream darted off after her just as the Egg-

Pawns fired at them. A barrage of rockets screamed through the sky and roared towards the space that had been occupied by the girls just seconds before. Sora, Amy and Cream felt the heat and force of the explosion slam into them and knock them off their feet as the ground behind them erupted in a hailstorm of rocks and fire. The girls grimaced as they were thrown onto the ground but they were back up in no time. Dr. Finitevus watched with great amusement. He was formulating plans for an army of villains to rise in Eggman's stead and take over Mobius. He was here to find Team Diamond and recruit them into his army. Although he was confident that his plans were fool-proof and he wouldn't fail, Finitevus knew it never hurt to squash a few ants before the entire colony invades so he decided to try and see if he could help the Egg-Pawns kill Sora, Amy and Cream. The less Royal Fighters the better he thought. Not to mention he had sent Scourge and Fiona to kill Sora once* only for them to fail. Their failure had not been taken lightly by him at all. Now he was here, he could see about killing Sora himself. She was dangerous after all since she was a super-spy and the last thing he wanted as for Sora to end up discovering his plans. So while he was here, he could help the Egg-Pawns get rid of Sora along with Amy and Cream once and for all. He watched as Sora, Amy and Cream tried to find cover as the Egg-Pawns started firing rockets at them. Grinning to himself, Finitevus activated a warp ring and opened it up just in front of Sora, Amy and Cream. The girls couldn't stop themselves from running into it for they hadn't even had time to register it as it appeared in front of them. The girls disappeared through the warp ring and Finitevus re-opened it directly in the line of fire from an Egg-Pawn. The girls emerged from the warp ring and the Egg-Pawn prepared to fire. Unluckily for the Egg-Pawn, Sora, Amy and Cream ducked down just as it fired a rocket at them. The warp ring was still open so it shot through the warp ring and emerged from the other warp ring that had brought the girls straight to it. There was an Egg-Pawn in the way of the warp ring so the rocket smashed through the Egg-Pawn and reduced it to smithereens. Finitevus sighed loudly. He practically threw the girls into the Egg-Pawn's face and it still failed to kill them! He considered doing the dirty work himself but he knew better than to get involved when a lot of rockets were going off at once on the battlefield. He watched as Amy summoned her Piko-Piko hammer to her hands and walloped the Egg-Pawn into the air. The Egg-Pawn was sent

flying across the battlefield and it crashed slap-bang into the wall of the refuelling station. That seemed to send alarm bells ringing though for the refuelling station's gun turrets suddenly began to twitch. Amy watched with horror as the station's gun turrets aimed directly at her and prepared to fire.

"Girls! Look out!" screeched Amy, running for her life.

"The station's turrets are aiming at us!" cried Sora "Evasive action and now!"

Cream took to the skies with a flap of her ears and Amy and Sora ran for it as the gun-turrets fired at them. The girls had managed to elude the turrets so the blasts missed them and instead just tore chunks of the ground up into the air. Sora yanked on Amy's arms and pulled her down as a huge slab of debris sailed over their heads, narrowly missing them. The gun turrets turned slightly and aimed at Sora and Amy. It was about to shoot but Cream bravely flew into the way of one gun turret. The gun turret aimed at Cream and fired, missing by centimetres as Cream ducked down. Cream flew to the side, the gun turret following her as she flew away. Cream landed atop another gun turret and the first turret aimed directly at her. As you know, there is a reason as to why the hero will often jump in front of something when being shot at. The gun turret fired but Cream flew off into the air, leaving the second turret to be obliterated by the first gun turret's shots. The shots tore through the metal and reduced the turret to scrap. There were only three turrets left now but two of them were on the other side of the station so they wouldn't pick up on anything since nothing was in their way. The only remaining gun turret on the side the girls were facing aimed at Cream and tried to shoot her again. Cream dodged but only by millimetres. She wasn't safe up in the air anymore. She had to get down to the ground and fast before she got shot. She flew down towards the ground, aiming for an Egg-Pawn that was watching her and seeing if it could take a shot at her. The gun-turret fired but Cream swerved to the right, causing the gun-turret to miss and hit the Egg-Pawn, vaporising it in seconds. Cream felt incredibly lucky to have dodged such a blast. It scared her to see how powerful the turret blasts could be. Those turrets could probably take down a building if there was one for them to shoot at. She flew down beside

Amy and Sora, the two watching the gun turret nervously as it aimed at them. Cream grabbed Sora and Amy and flew them out of the way, leaving the turret to shoot at unoccupied ground. Cream landed a good distance away and put Amy and Sora down. The gun turret did not seem to sense them at the distance they were at now. It was quite clear that the gun turret had a huge design flaw. It could only sense its targets from a short distance. Stand too far from it and it won't pick you up. It was amazing how Eggman's technology could fail in so many ways despite the threat it posed to them on occasion. Sora stared grimly at the gun turret as it searched for any intruders.

"With that thing on us, it'll be very difficult to break into the station." murmured Sora "It keeps shooting at us anytime we get near it."

"We should just grab an Egg-Pawn and steal its rocket launcher!" declared Amy "Then use it on the gun turret! Simple as that!"

"But Miss Rose, what if the Egg-Pawns are too close to the gun-turret?" asked Cream "It'll shoot at us if we try and steal a rocket launcher from an Egg-Pawn!"

"Then we let the Egg-Pawns come to us." said Sora matter-of-factly "We're out of the turret's range. If an Egg-Pawn comes to us, we can steal its weapon without a problem."

"Sounds good to me." said Amy happily "Egg-Pawns! Come and get us!" she screeched confidently at the Egg-Pawns, her hammer in hand and ready to smash them.

The Egg-Pawns did indeed come to get Sora, Amy and Cream but they didn't reach them for Dr. Finitevus used a trio of warp rings to warp the girls closer to the refuelling station. Sora, Amy and Cream weren't even sure what had happened until they realized they were looking up at the refuelling station and were suddenly closer to it than they had been. The girls squealed in alarm as the gun turret that had been a good distance away from them suddenly pointed down at them and prepared to fire. The girls ran for it quickly as the gun turret shot at them. The gun turret missed thanks to the girl's evasive action but it had been very close. It only missed them by millimetres. As they ran away from the firing gun-turret, Amy grumbled to herself.

"OK, what's the big idea with these random warp rings?!" she moaned "They keep appearing from nowhere and throwing us into danger!"

"Isn't it obvious Amy?" sighed Sora "Dr. Finitevus must be nearby and he's trying to kill us! Only he has warp rings remember?"

"Well once I find that creep, I'll give him what for!" declared Amy.

"Is that him up there?" asked Cream, pointing up at the cliff top that loomed ahead of them.

Sora whipped out her binoculars and peered through them, trying to see as best as she could while running. She caught sight of an albino furred echidna covered in a black cape with a gold circle and white star on it. Sora put her binoculars away and frowned to herself.

"Oh yeah, that's him alright." she muttered "Amy, Cream, change of plan. You two get up there and keep Finitevus distracted. I'll destroy the station alone."

"You sure about that Sora?" asked Amy worriedly.

"Positive." insisted Sora "Trust me girls, I'll be fine."

"You'd better be." said Amy sternly "We can't fight Finitevus AND watch your back at the same time."

Sora just smiled a dry smile at Amy and she separated from the two, running towards an Egg-Pawn that had a rocket launcher aimed at her. Finitevus summoned a warp ring from nowhere and it opened up just in front of Sora. But Sora was ready for it this time. She skidded to a halt and seized the warp ring. The warp ring closed and she tossed it over to Amy. Amy caught the warp ring and used it to warp herself over to Finitevus. Finitevus only watched as the warp ring opened up directly in front of him and spat out Amy and Cream. He'd already moved out of the way before they even came out of the warp ring. Finitevus just sneered at Amy and Cream as if they were nothing more than nuisances for him. He had no reason to be bothered about them of course given how Amy and Cream would be

no threat to him at all. These two were the last people you would rely on to defeat a powerful fighter like him. Finitevus was a man who liked to have some entertainment with his enemies and would gladly give Amy and Cream a good beating if he had to. Finitevus cricked his neck and smiled wickedly.

"So girls, are you ready for a fight to the death?" he purred.

"We are alright and the death that'll come from this fight will be yours!" snarled Amy "I'm gonna bash your brains out!"

"You bad echidna!" yelled Cream, pointing at Finitevus like an angry child who's telling her parent off "You've done many evil things and you're working with Dr. Eggman! You're going to pay for what you did!"

Her pet Chao Cheese nodded agreeably and flexed his muscles, or whatever muscles he had.

"Oh I'm sorry, you haven't been very updated on current events have you?" crooned Finitevus "I'm not with Dr. Eggman anymore. I have abdicated my ties with Eggman. I'm going solo now."

"Well if you're not with Eggman anymore, why are you here?" asked Amy curiously "We thought you were defending his station or something."

"The refuelling stations are none of my business." retorted Finitevus "Remember, I'm not with Eggman anymore. I was actually here for classified reasons but then I came across you three and thought I could help you to your deaths. After all, the Royal Fighters will be easier to take down when there's less of you…"

"So you're trying to kill us so you've got less people to deal with?!" cried Amy crossly "Why you snivelling coward! You so deserve a beating for this!"

"Just try it fool." snarled Finitevus, his face relaxed but his voice less so as he spoke those words "I'm too powerful for you. Even your entire team couldn't beat me."

Amy had had just about enough of Finitevus's bragging. Somehow

when a villain bragged, it just got on her nerves VERY fast and very easily. Amy ran towards Finitevus with her hammer raised and aimed squarely at his head. Finitevus didn't seem to care though; he just stood there and waited for Amy to come at him. It was always scary when Finitevus didn't seem bothered about what was going on. It meant he was very confident about the situation and confidence can make you a dangerous opponent. Especially when your confidence hinges on your intelligence and strength, two things that Finitevus excelled in. Finitevus stepped to the side and drew his arm across his chest. Amy was about to swing the hammer at her but Finitevus backhanded her in the head and threw her down onto the ground. Amy winced as her head began to throb in pain. It felt like she'd been whacked by a sack full of dry cement. Cream gasped and she flew toward Finitevus, angry at him for punching Amy. Finitevus didn't even raise an eyebrow as Cream ascended towards him with her flapping ears. Cream was probably the worst person to fight him. Amy at least had a liable weapon and some strength to her but Cream had little to nothing. Barely any strength and her own pet Cheese wasn't all that useful either. Finitevus didn't even waste any strength on Cream. He just summoned a warp ring to his hand and used it to send Cream flying straight down into the floor face first. Cream cried out like a baby who's banged its head on the wall by accident and she clutched her face, rubbing it tenderly to ease the pain. Finitevus then grabbed Cream by the neck and hoisted her up to his eye line as if she weighed nothing in his hand. Cream squirmed madly as Finitevus prepared to snap her neck. It sickened her as to how something could be so evil. Finitevus was perfectly willing to kill an innocent little girl just because it suited him. Finitevus closed his hand around Cream's scalp but before he could twist her head and finish her off, Amy threw her hammer at him. Finitevus spun around and held Cream in the hammer's path, leaving the hammer to hit Cream in the back of her head. Amy gasped in horror as her hammer hit Cream and Finitevus resumed his killer move. But again he was interrupted. Cheese flew into his face and fisted him in the eye. Finitevus dropped Cream on the ground and placed a hand over his eye, roaring in pain. Cream rubbed her neck better and stomped on Finitevus's foot to add more pain to him. Finitevus screamed furiously and he retaliated with a vicious jab to the chest that almost felt like a stab to the heart for Cream. Cream fell down onto her bottom, clutching her chest as if

she'd received a stab wound. Amy ran towards Finitevus and because she hadn't retrieved her hammer yet, she resorted to using her fists. She threw a punch at Finitevus. Unluckily for Amy, she wasn't that skilled in other forms of combat, only with her hammer so the punch didn't even get near Finitevus before he held up a fist to catch it. He threw Amy's arm aside and slammed a foot into Amy's belly. Amy spluttered hoarsely as the wind was literally knocked out of her. She doubled over and coughed, trying to get the air back into her lungs. Finitevus grabbed Amy by the arms and kicked her up into the air. The hedgehog hurtled in a spiral through the air and crashed down roughly on her side. The impact left some stinging cuts and grazes that made Amy wince. Finitevus picked up Amy's hammer which she had tried to throw at him earlier and he walloped Cream with it. Cheese tried to help his owner but Finitevus hammered him down into the ground with Amy's hammer. Tossing the hammer away, Finitevus ran towards Amy, ready to attack her once again.

Back over to Sora, she wasn't having much luck herself. The Egg-Pawns were all firing rockets at her and the vixen continuously had to run for her life before she could get hit by the rockets. She threw herself down onto the ground as one sailed over her head and smashed into the ground a few feet away from her. Sora was about to get up but she soon realized that there was another rocket launcher pointing at her. She turned around and saw that there were multiple Egg-Pawns standing before her and waiting to launch a rocket at her. Sora wouldn't be able to avoid them all, not by a long shot. She was dead now. Sora closed her eyes and waited for the end to come for her. But it wasn't coming for her yet. The Egg-Pawns took aim but as they prepared to fire, something slammed into them and whisked them all off their feet. Sora opened her eyes and to her delight, saw that she knew what had slammed into them. Her younger brother Miles "Tails" Prower and his girlfriend Cosmo the Seedrian had arrived on the scene and had driven the hover-saucer that they were occupying directly into the Egg-Pawns. They were all destroyed instantly by the saucer slamming into them and as Tails ground the saucer to a halt, the Egg-Pawns were thrown across the terrain like discarded rubbish. Tails and Cosmo stepped out of the stopped saucer and Sora ran over to them. She hugged Tails graciously and hugged Cosmo too.

"Good timing you two!" squealed Sora "I thought I was a goner back there!"

"Thank goodness we arrived in time then big sister." said Tails happily.

"So what brings you here then?" asked Sora, hoping she didn't sound ungrateful at the fact Tails and Cosmo had arrived.

"We're looking for the stolen Chaos Emerald." explained Cosmo "The search just coincidentally happened to bring us here So how's things going with you, Amy and Cream?"

"Well we were planning a strategic ambush on the refuelling station but Dr. Finitevus kinda compromised the mission." explained Sora "Amy and Cream are dealing with him right now while it try and destroy the station."

"Sora, are you insane?!" shrieked Tails "Amy and Cream can't stop Finitevus on their own!"

"What else could I do little brother?" asked Sora defensively "He was getting in our way! We needed a distraction! And now you've destroyed some Egg-Pawns, I know just what to do to make him back off. Their rocket launchers will come in handy definitely."

She looked at the broken Egg-Pawns that lay littered around the hover-saucer. There were a lot of rocket launchers for the heroes to use against Finitevus. And also to break into the refuelling station and set up the bombs. Tails and Cosmo saw the rocket launchers and they could see what Sora was thinking.

"Good idea Sora." said Tails brightly "We can fire a rocket at Finitevus and hopefully send him running."

"I'll do the firing." offered a voice that Sora didn't think she'd hear again "It's the least I could do to say thanks for helping me out in my time of need."

Sora gaped in surprised as she saw that Tails and Cosmo had a passenger with them. Roxy the Raccoon waved uneasily at Sora, knowing exactly why the vixen was so shocked to see her. Last time

they'd met, her team had tortured her and killed one of her friends in the spying field***. Sora glared at Roxy angrily and she pointed at him as if wanting to stab her with a dagger.

"What the hell is SHE doing here?!" snarled Sora "Little brother, what the hell are you thinking, bringing that witch in on this?!"

"Sora please, she's on our side!" cried Cosmo, grabbing Sora by the shoulders and making the vixen look at her "We promise you she is! She betrayed Team Diamond and wanted to make her life better for herself! She's on the run for Team Diamond have found out that she's betrayed them and we're protecting her from them! Honest!"

Sora seemed adamant to believe that story but she knew better than to accuse Cosmo of lying. Cosmo couldn't tell a lie even if she wanted to and Sora knew it. Sora looked at Roxy, less venom in her eyes but her expression still a little suspicious.

"Is this true Roxy?" asked Sora "Or are you trying to deceive little Cosmo here?"

"I assure you honey, it's anything BUT a lie." insisted Roxy "I really have turned over a new leaf. I HATED it with Team Diamond! I wanted to leave their side since the day I joined them! I was given that opportunity at last but sadly…Lennox found out I'd betrayed him and I bet he'll be baying for my blood after I knocked him out. Please…I beg of you…believe me." her face fell into a desperate, sad expression that matched the tone of her words "I promise you, this isn't a lie. It's the truth. I SWEAR it!"

Sora thought very carefully for a moment before giving her verdict.

"OK Roxy…I believe you." said Sora a little slowly but her tone more friendly and understanding now "And I must say, well done for betraying those monsters. You instantly deserve my trust for that."

"Thank you Sora." said Roxy brightly "And I really am sorry about Joel by the way. If there was anything I could have done, I would have saved him for you. I'm sorry that I couldn't…"

"It's alright Roxy, there was nothing you could have done." said Sora

"I still miss my friend but I'm glad you hold remorse for his needless death too. It means a lot to me."

"I've been a very bad girl over the years so it's about time I started improving myself." said Roxy "Now then, where's this Finitevus guy so I can launch a rocket at him for you?"

"Up on the cliffs." said Sora, pointing at the cliffs "The rocket launchers have a view-point on them for long range shots, you'll be able to hit him hopefully."

"What if he uses a warp ring to send the rocket away?" asked Cosmo.

"I'll launch a second rocket." volunteered Tails "I'll shoot at the cliff edges and hopefully bring him down in a rock slide. If Amy and Cream are in the line of fire, I may have to use a different tactic…"

"It's risky but we'll have to do what we can." said Sora "We've got enough on our plate as it is."

"Indeed. Stolen Chaos Emerald, Eggman refuelling station, Roxy on the run and Finitevus has just come here to complicate things further." murmured Tails "We'll have to try what we can to make things easier for us."

Sora nodded and she picked up a rocket launcher. Tails and Roxy picked up ones for themselves and they got into position while Sora prepared to punch a hole into the refuelling station. Tails and Roxy peered through the view-scopes of the rocket launchers they held and aimed at Finitevus. They waited for Sora to do her thing so that it would be easier for them to concentrate and so the sound Sora's rocket would make when slamming into the metal wall of the refuelling station wouldn't startle them and make them misfire. Sora aimed at the refuelling station and she fired a rocket at the gun turret so that it wouldn't shoot at her when she tried to break into the station. The rocket roared out of its launcher and blasted the turret to smithereens. The turret wouldn't be shooting anything anymore. Pleased with herself, Sora aimed the rocket launcher at the wall of the refuelling station and she fired another rocket. The rocket roared across the terrain and slammed into the wall like a fist into wood.

The rocket exploded, tearing great chunks out of the wall and leaving a huge gap in it. Just perfect for anyone trying to get into the internals of the station and blow it up. Pleased with her handiwork, Sora tossed away her rocket launcher and ran over to the refuelling station. She had her three bombs clipped on her utility belt still and now she'd finally put them to good use. Now Sora had done what she needed to do, Tails and Roxy were free to do their jobs. Roxy peered through the view scope and watched as a white echidna advanced on a beaten and battered Amy Rose and Cream the Rabbit. She knew who she was aiming at despite never seeing Finitevus before. She recognized Amy and Cream from the last time she'd met them and that was during Team Diamond's first outing with Sonic and friends****. It felt forever since she'd last seen Amy and Cream and yet Roxy recognized them as if she'd only seen them yesterday, especially Amy since she'd helped her team kidnap her and Tails. Roxy had the feeling that Finitevus had beaten the girls to a pulp and was about to finish them off. All the better for her to pull the trigger. Luckily for Tails, Finitevus was near the edge of the cliff so he could aim there and take down Finitevus if Roxy's rocket failed to get to him. Roxy pulled the trigger and a rocket launched straight towards Finitevus like an eagle homing in on the helpless rabbit that was doomed to be its dinner. Tails fired seconds after Roxy had fired so that it would be impossible for Finitevus to block the two rockets. Finitevus saw Roxy's rocket heading towards him and he was quick to open up a warp ring and send it flying away from him and up into the sky. But he was unprepared for the second rocket. The second rocket slammed into the side of the cliff and blew huge chunks of rocks into the air. Finitevus was thrown off his feet by the force of the explosion and he landed sharply on his head. The blow knocked him out cold. He was at least safe from the rock slide that Tails had started as chunks of rock began to rain down to the bottom of the cliff. Amy and Cream strained as they forced themselves onto their feet and smiled at the knocked out Finitevus.

"Ungh…that's great…he's knocked out." grunted Amy "Now we can…focus on the mission properly without any interference."

Cream nodded and she used whatever strength she had to flap her ears and fly off the ground. She put her hands on Amy's waist and carried her off the cliff. Amy and Cream had had a tough battle and

they had barely so much as landed a blow on Finitevus but they had triumphed in the end thanks to Tails's interference and they felt quite good about it. That gave Cream enough strength to carry Amy down to the ground below despite the beating she'd received. A good feeling can bring new strength to a person, even after the most severe of beatings. As Cream carried Amy down the cliff, she spotted Tails, Cosmo and Roxy in the distance and carried Amy over to them. She landed down before Tails and allowed Amy to collapse onto the floor for she was still feeling weak from the fight. Cream collapsed beside her, exhausted from flying and carrying Amy whilst fighting her injuries. Tails and Cosmo knelt down beside them and did their best to comfort the girls.

"You alright Amy and Cream?" asked Tails worriedly.

"We've been…banged about a bit…but we'll be fine." grunted Amy "Finitevus is knocked out…thanks to the rocket…throwing him onto his head. "

"W-was it you…who fired that rocket at Finitevus?" asked Cream.

"Well yes, but Roxy here fired one too and kept him distracted enough for me to fire the rocket that got Finitevus." said Tails modestly.

"Please don't attack her, she's on our side." Cosmo quickly added before anything could happen "She's betrayed Team Diamond and is on the run from them. She needs our protection and has decided to help us out in anyway necessary."

Amy and Cream stared incredulously at Roxy, the raccoon smiling nervously at them as if sensing some awkwardness building up all of the sudden. She didn't blame Amy and Cream for being so shocked. She was a member of a team of cold-hearted treasure hunters after all. Amy frowned at Roxy but then changed her expression.

"So you turned traitor have…you?" grunted Amy "This…better not be another act. I remember how you deceived me and…Tails the first time we met…" she warned venomously.

"It's no act, I swear it." said Roxy hastily "When I betrayed Team

Diamond, I MEANT it. I may have been a former actress but I swear this isn't an act. Sonic can vouch for it for he was the one who helped me to get away from Team Diamond in the first place."

"We believe you." said Cream sweetly "If Mr. Sonic…can vouch for your heel-turn then…it must be true."

"It is." insisted Roxy "And since Team Diamond are after me, I've offered to join the Royal Fighters for extra protection. Plus I think you guys are the right people to go to if I'm to rebuild my life and make up for all the crimes I did."

"Well then…welcome to the team Roxy." Amy smiled happily "We'd be…happy to have a Team Diamond turncoat on…our team."

"Thanks hon, that's very nice of you to say." said Roxy appreciatively.

"You're welcome." beamed Amy.

"So…where's Miss Sora?" asked Cream "Is she setting…up the bombs to destroy the station?"

"Yes." said Tails "We'll just wait for her to come back and…"

His words were snatched away by an enormous ear-splitting bang that came out of nowhere. Roxy suddenly screamed in agony and clutched her arm, screaming and wincing as her arm suddenly flared up with excruciating pain. Tails, Cosmo, Amy and Cream cried out in shock and realized what had happened. Roxy had been shot but the shot had been a misfire and she'd only been skimmed across the arm by the bullet that was meant to finish her off. And Tails already knew who had fired the shot. Team Diamond had finally caught up with them. Lennox Meers the Meerkat had a revolver in his hand and smoke trailed from the barrel. He cursed violently over the fact he had missed and he was quick to load some more bullets into his revolver. Owen Pounder and Alistair Drakken stood beside him, hoping to get a shot at Roxy themselves. Lennox advanced towards the Royal Fighters with his revolver pointed at the pained Roxy. Roxy looked over her shoulder and saw that Lennox was once again, pointing a gun at her. She had the feeling that he wouldn't lay

off this time. She'd been lucky before due to Lennox's love for her getting in the way but after knocking him out earlier, she wouldn't be spared this time. Cosmo stood defensively in front of Roxy, something she never thought she would have done in her lifetime. Tails stood defensively in front of Roxy too, standing beside Cosmo and widening Roxy's shield. Lennox pointed the revolver at the two.

"Get. Out. Of. My. Way!" he snarled, spitting the word out harshly as if they had a bad taste in his mouth.

"No! We won't let you kill Roxy!" retorted Tails "She had every right to betray you cold-hearted, murderous thieves! She should not be wasted just for doing the right thing!"

"Roxy had NO right to betray us!" shouted Lennox "She should have asked us permission to live and that would have been the end of it! Treachery was not an option and she has to be put down for it! It'll set an example for any future treasure-hunters that might want to join our cause!"

"Urrrggghhh…I told you Lennox, I wasn't gonna let you wipe my memory!" Roxy strained to speak as her arm continued to throb "I couldn't trust you to do it! You might have wiped my ENTIRE memory and not just my memories of H.U.N.T.! I didn't want to be amnesiac so I HAD to betray you! I had every right to do so!"

"You're such a fool Roxy…" muttered Lennox "When I said "We'll erase any memories of H.U.N.T.", I MEANT it! Did you really think we'd wipe your entire memory clean as well?"

"Duh." scoffed Roxy "It'd be just like you to destroy a poor, unfortunate person like that. And I wasn't the only one who had the right idea. I mean Rouge the Bat betrayed you didn't she? And Kiara's parents too. They knew better than to trust a horrible, lying, conniving, cold-hearted snake like you!"

Lennox was beginning to lose his temper. His grip tightened on the revolver. If he gripped any tighter, he might accidentally crush it. Wouldn't put it past him to do that given how angry he was.

"Roxy, stop hiding behind Tails and Cosmo and face your death like

a REAL H.U.N.T. member!" he commanded furiously.

"GO &%$£ YOURSELF!" screamed Roxy in defiance.

Amy had to cover Cream's ears to prevent the little girl from hearing the ugly swear word that Roxy spat out at Lennox. Tails and Cosmo were pretty surprised, yet impressed at the raccoon's valour. They wouldn't have dared to tell Lennox that and yet they were used to facing dangerous villains like him. Roxy's words seemed to have a chilling effect on Lennox for the meerkat just stood there in silence, mouth open and eyes wide open as if Roxy had just told him to commit suicide. He never expected Roxy to say that to him. He never would have expected that Roxy had it in her to say something so hardcore. The meerkat's expression quickly changed from shock to anger. His teeth clenched so hard that they came close to cracking. His face was red with fury and to be honest, I'm pretty sure that Lennox is literally seeing red right now. He aimed the revolver at Roxy and curled his finger around the trigger. But Lennox was so blinded by rage that he'd failed to notice that Cosmo had drawn out her disc weapon, her Flower Blade which Tails had made for her. She deployed the disc's blades and she threw the weapon at Lennox. The disc skimmed across his face and the meerkat roared in pain as blood streamed down his face and down his neck. He dropped his revolver on the ground and clutched his face tensely. Now he was distracted, Tails and Cosmo made their move. Amy and Cream remained where they were to protect Roxy. The raccoon wasn't in any position to fight with an injured arm and Amy and Cream were best suited for defence rather than offence given their current state. Tails ran up towards Lennox and he uppercut the meerkat in the face. Lennox was whisked off his feet and down onto his back where he landed hard with a thump and winced in pain. Owen and Alistair decided to help their injured leader. Owen lumbered towards Tails with his fists clenched and his muscles flexed. But Owen should know better than to try and taken on somebody as fast and as nimble as Tails. Tails had already flown out of the way before Owen's fists even launched at him. Owen was just left to punch at empty ground as Tails dodged his attack. Laughing at Owen, Tails flew straight at him and kick-slammed him directly in the face. Owen was quite surprised at how hard the fox could kick for somebody so young. He maybe strong and muscular

and have great endurance but even he wasn't prepared for a kick to the face. Owen stumbled backwards and Cosmo ran around behind him and knelt down behind his heels. This caused Owen to fall over her and onto his back. Alistair flew towards Cosmo and he grabbed her with his hands. Cosmo yelped as Alistair seized her and carried her up into the air but Tails was already on hand to save her, flying behind Alistair and dropkicking him in the back of his head. Alistair dropped Cosmo, the Seedrian safely floating down to the ground as her petal skirt spread out underneath her. Alistair turned around and roundhouse punched Tails in the face. The fox managed to remain airborne amazingly enough and he retaliated by exploiting a weakness Alistair now had. Because Roxy had cracked his visor earlier and rendered his vision impaired, he had been forced to break it so he could see properly. But that came with a side-effect. His eyes were exposed and Tails knew it. He threw a punch and Alistair held his arms in front of his mouth, expecting the punch to hit him there. But Tails had aimed at his eyes. He punched Alistair in the left eye and made the bat roar in agony, clutching his eye in pain. His eyes had become very sensitive, a side-effect from the operation that had given him the mask he needed to wear in order to live. Even poking his eyes was enough to make Alistair cry out loudly as if he'd been punched. Tails was quite pleased to see he had an advantage over his air-flying rival. Now the bat was distracted by the pain in his eye, Tails raised his leg and slammed the heel of his foot down onto Alistair's head, sending him flying down into the ground. Alistair cried out as his body sharply hit the rocky ground below and he found it hard to get back up. Laughing at his success, Tails flew off to fight Owen. The rabbit had Cosmo down on her bottom and backing away from him in fear. Owen reached out to grab Cosmo and break her in two. This was just what Cosmo wanted though. She was luring Owen into a false sense of security. The moment Owen prepared to grab her, Cosmo whipped out her Flower Blade but she had the blades sheathed this time. She threw the disc in-between Owen's eyes. The rabbit flinched and gripped his face in pain. Cosmo leaped back onto her feet and kicked Owen in the knee. It wasn't a strong kick but it didn't have to be. The knee was a sensitive part of the body, even on somebody as strong as Owen Pounder. Owen doubled over and rubbed his knee in pain. Cosmo decided to add insult to injury by kicking him in the other knee. As much as she hated having to hurt somebody, she

was willing to make an exception in this case. It was fight for your life in this case and Cosmo was determined to keep hers, especially as she was the last Seedrian alive. Owen growled furiously at Cosmo and he threw a punch at her. Cosmo yelped and she threw her Flower Blade at him, this time with the blades deployed. The disc scratched Owen across the arm and threw off his punch. Owen ignored the pain in his arm for he was actually used to getting scratched and getting cuts and he threw another punch at Cosmo. Cosmo dodged, not fast enough though. Owen just caught her across the face and threw her onto her side. The punch wasn't even at its strongest for Cosmo had only been hit by the tail end of the punch and even then, Cosmo was a little disorientated and wondering which way is up. Taking advantage, Owen grabbed Cosmo and prepared to slam her down onto his knee. But Tails pile-dived him in the back and made him drop the helpless Seedrian. He fell down onto his stomach and Cosmo landed directly on top of him for Owen had fallen forward underneath her as she was thrown up in the air by him. Cosmo hopped off of Owen as Tails landed down beside her.

"Thanks Tails." Cosmo beamed, hugging him gratefully.

"You're welcome beautiful." said Tails modestly "I must say, you're getting quite good at fighting now. Owen barely landed a blow on you."

"I guess I'm just lucky this time." suggested Cosmo "Or Owen's just a slow opponent."

"When you're as heavy on muscle as he is, you're gonna be slow really." agreed Tails.

Owen did not like to be thought of as slow. He picked himself up and lashed out at Tails and Cosmo. He nearly got them much to their surprise but their reflexes had kicked in just at the right time to dodge the punch. The two kids then kicked Owen in the knees and brought him down, clutching his knees in pain and his face twisted in agony. It hurts more and more when you get kicked in a place you've already been kicked in. Alistair had recovered from being punched in the eye and he flew towards Tails and Cosmo. Cosmo saw him coming and she threw her Flower Blade at him. She had

aimed at his eyes for like Tails, she suspected it was a weak spot given how feeble they looked. She hadn't deployed the blades since she didn't want a dead body on her hands. The green disc hurtled through the air and hit Alistair between the eyes. Even the space between his eyes was vulnerable. It didn't help that he was flying really fast either so the impact was even harder. Alistair yelled as if he'd been hit by a sledgehammer and he dive bombed down into the ground. Tails gave Cosmo the thumbs up.

"Good shot!" he cried in amazement.

Cosmo smiled gratefully. It felt good to not be so useless anymore. Tails definitely had the right mind when he thought to build her a weapon of her own to use. It had been very useful to her in this fight. Owen and Alistair got back onto their feet and they lunged at Tails and Cosmo again. Tails and Cosmo laughed as a brilliant idea came to their heads. They ducked down and left Owen and Alistair to crash into each other. Alistair felt like he'd flown straight into a brick wall given how solid Owen was. Owen didn't even feel Alistair slam into him. The bat wasn't all that solid compared to him. Alistair was thrown onto the ground whereas Owen just brushed himself off as if nothing had happened. That gave Tails and Cosmo the opportunity to kick him behind his knees and force his legs to bend. The top-heavy rabbit fell over as his legs suddenly gave out underneath him. They high-fived and prepared to launch another attack on Owen as he prepared to stand up again.

Meanwhile, Lennox had picked himself up and was advancing menacingly towards Amy, Cream and Roxy. Roxy was tenderly rubbing the wound in her arm better whereas Amy and Cream forced themselves onto their feet and prepared to defend her. Amy had her hammer in hand and ready to attack. Lennox just raised his revolver and prepared to shoot. But he wasn't prepared for the sneak attack that Cream had planned. As he aimed at Amy's head, Cheese suddenly flew in from nowhere and grabbed the revolver. He yanked it out of Lennox's hand, so hard in fact that he nearly dislocated Lennox's trigger finger. Lennox jumped up, trying to get the revolver back but Cheese held the revolver out of his reach. This was perfect, it gave Amy the chance to run in and wallop Lennox with her hammer, using whatever strength she had left in her. As

Lennox was knocked down onto his side, Cheese threw the revolver onto the ground, directly beside Roxy. Roxy grabbed it with her good arm and she stood up. Lennox stood up too and ran back towards Amy and Cream, growing furiously and having a look on his face that meant he was ready to kill. But he soon changed his expression to one of fear for Roxy pointed the revolver directly at him. He stopped dead in his tracks and raised his hands in fear. Lennox wasn't usually the one who had a gun pointed at him so to have it happen to him was definitely enough to scare him. Roxy had her teeth clenched and her face narrowed into a scowl that could make even a bear retreat backwards in fear.

"You tried to kill me Lennox...now I'll kill you!" growled Roxy "You don't deserve to live after all you've ever done!"

"R-R-Roxy! D-don't shoot!" whimpered Lennox "P-please! I beg you! S-spare my life!"

"Give me a reason why I should!" snarled Roxy "You just tried to kill me! TWICE! Why should I spare your life when you're not willing to spare mine you hypocrite?! And for the record, I HATE hypocrites! So don't try hypocrisy on me you scoundrel!"

"But Roxy, if you kill me, that makes you no better than me!" protested Lennox, hoping that would be enough to tempt Roxy to stand down.

"Don't care, you've killed many innocent people in the past and treated me like dirt! It's time to put you out of my life for good Lennox Meers!" yelled Roxy, tears pouring down her face as she tightened her grip on the revolver and prepared to put a bullet in Lennox's head.

Amy and Cream didn't think that Roxy should go ahead with this. If she killed Lennox, it would make her no better than him and this was not the right image for a Royal Fighter. Royal Fighters didn't kill in cold blood like this and if Roxy was to join the Royal Fighters, she had to have the right image for the service. Amy grabbed Roxy's arm and made her drop the gun. Cream grabbed it so Lennox couldn't get it back and handed it to Cheese, the Chao flying up into the air to keep the revolver out of reach. Roxy glared at Amy.

"Amy! What the hell are you doing?!" screeched Roxy "Lennox is a psychopath! He needs to be put down!"

"No, he needs to...be incarcerated." said Amy firmly "Royal Fighters don't kill...in cold blood like what you're attempting. You...wanna join us? Then don't kill."

"But...he...!" protested Roxy wildly "He's a murderous psychopath! He deserves to die for his crimes!"

"No, he should be...punished for his crimes." noted Amy "Kill him now, you're just giving him...the easy way out. We Royal Fighters...don't kill. We arrest and imprison those...who do wrong. It's the right...thing to do and it makes us the better people. What will you be Roxy? A killer like Lennox? Or a Royal Fighter like us?"

Roxy was about to argue some more but she actually composed herself and thought about what Amy had said. She really hated Lennox with all her heart and held no remorse for betraying him, even if he did "love" her. But at the same time, she didn't want to be seen in the same light as Lennox. All the killing Lennox and his team had done had contributed to her desire to leave the team. If she killed Lennox...it would make her a hypocrite and as mentioned earlier, she hated hypocrisy. Roxy now knew that Amy was right. Crying, she threw her arms around Amy and wailed loudly. Amy just hugged the raccoon back, hoping to comfort her as Roxy cried.

"Oh Amy...you're right!" sobbed Roxy "I'm no killer, I'm better than Lennox! I'm not like him! Oh please, can you ever forgive me for this?!"

"Of course." said Amy "I understand...why you'd feel the need...to kill Lennox. He did try...to kill you after all. I'm glad you listened to me though."

Roxy smiled appreciatively at Amy and she wiped her eyes dry. She was well on her way to becoming more like the Royal Fighters now, something she wanted to be. But it seemed she might not get the chance to be a Royal Fighter for Lennox reached into his cloak and pulled out...a spare revolver! Lennox was a man who always kept a spare gun on him after all. He pointed it at Roxy's back and

prepared to shoot her. Amy saw that Lennox had another gun on him and she was quick to react. She shoved Roxy out of the way just as Lennox fired. The bullet spat out towards her and embedded itself squarely in Amy's shoulder. The hedgehog screamed in pain and clutched her wounded shoulder as her arm began to feel numb and pain flared through her veins. Cream burst into tears of horror and she threw herself down onto her knees beside Amy. Roxy gasped in horror as Amy winced and was quick to react as Lennox shot at her again, the bullet missing her by centimetres and kicking up gravel. Cheese threw the other revolver over to Roxy so Roxy could have something to defend herself with. Roxy caught the revolver and she aimed at Lennox's knee. She pulled the trigger and fired at him. The bullet punched into Lennox's knee, shattering his kneecap and numbing his leg. Lennox let out a bloodcurdling scream and he collapsed onto the ground, completely in agony and screaming as if hoping to make the ground shudder. Roxy was amazed she had even hit him. She was mostly used to using a short range weapon such as her baton, not a long range weapon like a gun. She was pleased she did hit her target though. Lennox wouldn't catch her with a shattered knee. Roxy kept the revolver pointed at Lennox and glared coldly at him.

"Take off your cloak." she ordered "Or I'll shoot you in the other knee."

Lennox begrudgingly did as he was told. He removed his cloak and tossed it aside. Now any spare guns he had were out of his reach. Smiling confidently, Roxy snatched away his spare revolver and left the meerkat on the ground to do nothing but clutch his bleeding knee. Roxy picked up his cloak, which had several spare guns in the pockets, and she dumped it in the hover-saucer along with Lennox's two revolvers.

"We can take those to New Mobotropolis." she said "Keep them out of Lennox's reach. I bet you guys will put them to better use."

"We will Miss Roxy." said Cream brightly "I hope Miss Rose will be OK though...she's really hurt."

"I'll...ow...live!" grunted Amy, trying hard to defy the pain in her arm "It's...only a bullet in my shoulder...ungh...I've had...ungh...worse!"

"Maybe so but we need to get that fixed and soon." said Roxy firmly "A bullet wound is very serious you know. We need to get you medical attention."

Amy nodded agreeably. She'd be of no use on the battlefield with a bullet in her shoulder. But just as Roxy helped Amy to get into the hover-saucer, something strange happened. A warp ring opened up beneath Lennox and swallowed him up! The meerkat cried out in surprise as he disappeared through the warp ring. The same happened to Owen and Alistair too, much to the bewilderment of Tails and Cosmo. It didn't take them long to figure out what had happened though. Dr. Finitevus had awoken from his earlier knockout and had now used his warp rings to snatch away Lennox, Owen and Alistair. He smiled deviously as he advanced towards Roxy. The raccoon stared at him nervously, wondering what was going to happen. As Finitevus neared the saucer though, something began to happen. Amy's attention was caught by a loud whirring sound as something vibrated on the seat of the hover-saucer. It was Tails's Chaos Detector. Tails heard it vibrating and wondered what was going on. Amy passed it to him with her good arm and Tails took it. He glanced at the screen and was horrified at what it was telling him. Dr. Finitevus had the Chaos Emerald Captain Metal had stolen from him! No wonder he was having a tough time finding it earlier! Finitevus had obviously kept warping from location to location and he was carrying it with him the whole time! Now the situation was even worse than it already was. Finitevus could be very dangerous with a Chaos Emerald. Tails had to get it back and fast. Tails lunged at Finitevus but Finitevus just whipped out the Chaos Emerald and used a Chaos Control to freeze him in time. Tails slowed down to a stop before he could even grab hold of him. Smirking triumphantly, Finitevus opened up a warp ring underneath Roxy's feet. The raccoon screamed as she fell down into the warp ring and disappeared from view. Amy, Cream and Cosmo only watched with horror as Roxy was swallowed up by the warp ring. The warp ring vanished after Roxy fell through it and Finitevus smirked at the girls.

"Thanks ever so much for making my job easier." he purred "You gathered Team Diamond together for me so I could catch all four of them. I must commend you on your assistance."

"You monster! Bring Roxy back right now!" yelled Amy angrily "The others you can keep but bring back Roxy!"

"Yeah! Roxy was going to join us and be a hero like we are!" put in Cream "Bring her back at once you bad man!"

"I'm afraid I cannot do that." crooned Finitevus with a sarcastic tone in his voice, suggesting he wasn't afraid he couldn't do it after all "You see, I was looking for those four the whole time and now I have them, I'm going to leave here for there's no reason for me to stay anymore."

"Why do you want Team Diamond?" asked Cosmo.

"Find out yourself you freak of nature." growled Finitevus "So long you simple-minded fools..."

With a mocking wave goodbye, Finitevus opened up a warp ring and he disappeared through it, leaving the girls to do nothing but watch him leave, helpless to do anything about him now. As Finitevus disappeared, the Chaos Control wore off and Tails suddenly found himself falling down flat on his face. He quickly realized that Finitevus had gone and that Roxy was also gone too. Upon realizing this, he thumped the ground angrily.

"NO!" he wailed "The creep got away! He's got the Chaos Emerald me and Cosmo were looking for and now he's kidnapped Roxy! Damn him! Damn him to heck!" he kicked angrily to let off some more steam.

"How will we rescue Miss Roxy?" asked Cream worriedly "What will Finitevus do to her now he's caught her?"

"I don't know..." murmured Amy grimly "But what the hell would Finitevus want with Team Diamond? Why didn't he kidnap us as well? He could have done so easily!"

"Maybe he didn't want us." suggested Cosmo "He wanted Team Diamond obviously. But why?"

"Some kind of sick experiment no doubt." muttered Tails bitterly "I'm afraid we can't do anything for poor Roxy now. We have to go home

and plan how we'll get back the Chaos Emerald and rescue Roxy. Plus we need some rest and recuperation too." he added, taking note of Amy's injured shoulder.

"We'll get going once Sora comes back." said Amy, rubbing her shoulder better "Hey, here she comes now."

Surely enough, Sora had finally finished setting up the bombs in the Death Egg refuelling station and had now run back to greet everybody. She was a bit disappointed to see that everybody looked unhappy for some reason.

"Hey guys, what's up?" asked Sora "I've set up the bombs for the refuelling station and I've timed them to go off in two minutes. That thing's going to be destroyed very shortly. Sorry I took so long, I had a job finding all the right places."

"That's great Sora." said Tails "I'm afraid we've got some bad news. Finitevus has kidnapped Roxy. And he also has the stolen Chaos Emerald."

"No!" cried Sora in horror "No, that's terrible! What's that fiend going to do to Roxy?! And what's he going to do now he has a Chaos Emerald?!"

"Something terrible I bet." muttered Tails "We have to get going now. Amy's injured and there's nothing else we can do here. Roxy will have to wait...as much as it hurts me to say it."

"We'll save her, don't worry little brother." said Sora reassuringly "At least we succeeded in destroying the refuelling station."

"Yeah...but it's not much of a success now." murmured Tails "We destroyed a station but lost someone I swore to protect. And failed to get back the Chaos Emerald. A bittersweet victory if I ever experienced one..."

Sora nodded understandingly as the Royal Fighters all boarded the hover-saucer and Tails started up the engine. The hover-saucer levitated up off the ground and Tails set the hover-saucer into its highest gear. The saucer sped away and Tails directed it back home

to New Mobotropolis. As they began to leave, the bombs Sora had placed inside the station went off. The station erupted into a terrific explosion that obliterated it completely, throwing chunks of metal and rock for miles around. Tails wondered if the Megapolis Royal Fighters would hear that at all. It was a very loud explosion and even as the saucer was driving away from the explosion, it was still ear-splittingly loud. The explosion meant something else to Tails at this moment though. Like his mission had blown up in his face. A tear escaped his eye as the sense of defeat crept over him. He swore to protect Roxy and he tried hard to get the Chaos Emerald back...and he'd failed to do both. This was a faliure that would loom over him for a very long time...

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 180**

**** He's right you know. Remember *Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius* Story 146?**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 137-138**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog Heroes of Mobius* Stories 68-69**

Well...this sucks. :(The bad guy wins this time around...I hope Roxy will be OK.

We'll have to wait and see if she'll be saved though. We need to return to the main series now and see if Wilson, Mandy and Geoffrey succeed in their mission.

As for* Tales from Mobius *, next time Sally Acorn, Bunnie Rabbot and Nicole take the spotlight for a jungle adventure that will shock you in more ways than one. Next time it's "Welcome to the Jungle Sally Acorn"...

Welcome to the Jungle Sally Acorn 1

Arc 26: Welcome to the Jungle Sally Acorn

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 190-191

Part 1: Jungle Bungle

"Mace! This is a pleasant surprise!" gasped Queen Sally Acorn in surprise as she embraced the elephant in a friendly huge that let him know that it was nice to see him again "I never would have thought we'd run into you."

"It's a pleasure to meet you again your highness." said Mace the Elephant happily, hugging Sally back "What brings you out into the Lost Jungle then? Seems an unusual place for someone of your heritage to visit isn't it?"

"Believe me Mace, I don't visit any place without a reason." said Sally, breaking up the hug "We're here on a very important mission and I'm sure you'd be interested in joining us now you're here."

The mission that Queen Sally Acorn and Bunnie Rabbot were on was of more importance than Mace could possibly realize. After getting back home from Solbius thanks to Blaze the Cat's Sol Emeralds*, Sally had shown all the Royal Fighters on the team what Nicole had managed to find out after hacking into the Egg-Bunker's main computer to download all the locations of the Death Egg refuelling stations that Eggman had been building all over the world lately for his upcoming vessel of doom which had a rather un-intimidating name, the Death Egg. But Silver the Hedgehog had told the Royal Fighters that he believed the Death Egg was responsible for the end of the world and Sally was determined to prevent the Death Egg from rising. After the Royal Fighters had all been assigned to their missions, Sally had chosen to take Bunnie with her to the Lost Jungle to destroy the refuelling station that was located there. Sally's agile fighting style and absurdly sharp blades combined with Bunnie's heavy-handed fighting style, flying abilities

and strength she wouldn't have if she didn't have her cybernetics would be perfect for a mission of this kind. The Lost Jungle was just like any normal jungle you could imagine with its abnormally tall trees, strange but fascinating vegetation, low hanging vines and exotic fruit that added a variety of colours to an otherwise vast sea of green and brown. The Lost Jungle was also part of the Mazuri landscape which explains why Mace the Elephant is here. Mace had been allowed to return home to Mazuri to deliver some reward money he'd been given by Sally for heroically helping to save Mandy and Kari's lives after they were kidnapped by Brawn the Rat a month ago.** Mace had spent more time than he realized in Mazuri but Sally had been OK with that since Mace deserved all the time in the world with his family for his heroism and she also wanted Mace to make his family as happy as possible with the reward money he'd been given. Now Mace was wondering around the Lost Jungle just for the joy of adventuring and exploring Mazuri's territory and now he'd come across Sally and Bunnie. The girls hadn't been doing a whole lot between now and meeting Mace though. They'd arrived at the Lost Jungle via a hover saucer and following Nicole's directions, Sally and Bunnie had trekked through the Lost Jungle with Sally hacking her way through the vegetation with her energy blades. They had made it into a clearing and just as they had stopped to take a break, Mace had suddenly emerged from within a wall of tall grass and huge bushes and was now greeting the girls happily.

"So girls, what mission is so imperative that you felt the need to come to the Lost Jungle?" asked Mace curiously.

"Be ready to listen Mace, it's quite a long story and you'll need to remember everything we tell you." said Sally slowly, preparing to explain herself.

"Explain as much as you need, I won't forget anything." said Mace casually.

"Oh of course, ya'll are an elephant and elephants never forget do they?" giggled Bunnie.

"That's just a funny stereotype but my memory is quite acute so you don't have to worry about too much details." assured Mace "So what's your business here then?"

"We've found out that Dr. Eggman is planning to make a ship called the Death Egg and he's been building a bunch of refuelling stations all over the world just so the Death Egg has places to make a stop should he need refuelling." Sally exposited "We managed to destroy two already but just as I used Nicole here to hack into the Egg-Bunker," she showed the handheld computer that housed the former Mobian lynx and Nicole's avatar emitted out from the computer and waved at Mace "I along with Sonic, Silver and Blaze were sent to another world by…something. We ended up stuck there for a whole week and now we fear the stations may pretty much be done already and the Death Egg's close to completion. So we've split up into groups and have now gone all over the world to destroy the last remaining stations and hopefully find out where the Death Egg is located. I'm going to use Nicole to hack into one of the stations and see if the Death Egg's location is on its data logs. And here's why the Death Egg is such a concern to us…" he voice became soft and eerily serious sounding as she prepared to say the next part "Silver and Blaze, our friends from the future, think the Death Egg will destroy Mobius completely and we want to stop it from rising before that can happen. You're very welcome to join us in our mission Mace."

Mace had been rather surprised at what he'd heard and he decided to see if he had remembered everything. Elephants may never forget as it is often said but like most stereotypes, it wasn't necessarily true.

"So you girls are trying to find a refuelling station for a ship called the Death Egg that you want to destroy because two guys from the future think the Death Egg destroys the world?" asked Mace "Is that correct?"

"Sure is sugah." said Bunnie, smiling.

"That's good." said Mace, pleased he remembered pretty much what he'd been told "Well I'm sorry to say I haven't seen any stations. I only just got to this jungle moments ago and haven't been through much of it so I can't tell you where it is or whatnot."

"It's OK Mace." said Sally reassuringly "We've got our ultimate tracking device right here."

She showed Nicole to Mace and the lynx's avatar smiled at the elephant. Mace smiled back at Nicole but then looked sad at her.

"So how did you end up being stuck in a computer miss?" he asked, feeling very sorry for Nicole "Last time I saw you, you were flesh and blood like the rest of us."

"It's a VERY long story Mace***…please don't make me talk about it." said Nicole, her digital face falling as the horrible memory of her conversion came back "I'd much rather not at this moment."

"I shan't breathe a word about it again Nicole." said Mace respectfully "We elephants often have a high level of respect for any Mobian out there…provided they're not evil of course. I'm sorry I asked."

"No, it's fine, please don't fret." said Nicole quickly "I'm getting used to my new life now and I've been quite useful to the team lately."

"Ah'll say, ya'll are pretty good at hackin' into Eggman tech hon." said Bunnie with a wink "It's thanks to you Nicole that we're even aware there's a refuelling station here."

"Why thank you Bunnie." said Nicole graciously.

"Anytime sugah." said Bunnie "So Nicole, where IS the refuelling station?"

Nicole fell silent as her avatar disappeared back into the computer handheld that Sally was holding. Her screen flashed as she began performing several scans to try and find out where the station was.

"Hmm…it's a bit tricky to pinpoint…" she mused from the handheld computer as she began working away "The thick growth around this jungle doesn't make it any easier to find but…satellite imagery seems to suggest it's in the north of where we are now, about an hour away. One of our satellites is picking up an image of a building that's red, white and gold and seems to have an Eggman logo on it."

"It's a good thing you have access to our satellites then." said Sally with a smile "OK then, we'll head north. You coming Mace?"

"Definitely." said Mace with a big smile on his crusty but muscular face "No way am I letting that looney toon Eggman end the world! My family's lives are JUST starting to pick up! They can't end now!"

"I agree." said Sally "And I myself would like it if me and Sonic had time to develop our relationship further so I'm not ready for the world to end either. For the sake of Mobius, we will find that station and with any luck, it'll help us find the Death Egg."

"Onward north and to the station!" hollered Bunnie "Let's go crack that station wide open and make Eggman sorry he built it!"

"I wouldn't yell if I were you Bunnie." said Nicole with a nervous giggle backing up her words "There's a huge chance that something will hear us in this jungle and I'd much prefer if we didn't attract any indigenous life forms to our location. The population of this jungle is quite feral after all and it's very likely we'd be torn apart and eaten alive if any of the wildlife was to pounce on us."

"Oh, sorry." said Bunnie meekly "Ah'll be quiet then."

"We'd best get moving just in case we have attracted any unwanted attention…" said Mace "Believe me, you never know what predators lurk in this jungle. The citizens of Mazuri sometimes are unlucky enough to run into them."

He glared up at the trees as he spotted a Mobini Black Mamba Snake lurking above them with a rather venomous, sly look in its slit pupil eyes and its forked tongue flickered out menacingly as if telling Mace he was tempted to bite him. Mace screwed his face up at the sight of the Black Mamba. He hated snakes. He though they were disgusting creatures and he wouldn't be letting one get near him in a hurry. Mobian Snakes, he didn't mind so much for they were more… normal in his eyes. The Mobini kind, he'd much rather not stick around with. Sally and Bunnie ignored the snake and they walked on through the vegetation with Sally in the lead and glancing at Nicole to see if she was going in the right direction. The Mobini Black Mamba watched them leave disappointedly and then slithered along the trees to find something else to sink its fangs into. Sally activated one of her arm blades and she cut through some thick bushes as Nicole told her to go on ahead. Bunnie and Mace followed her

closely behind, sticking as close to Sally as possible.

What the group didn't realize was that they had been watched. From the moment they'd met up with Mace, they'd been watched. There was a huge gorilla lurking behind a bush that had two neat circles trimmed in it so that the gorilla's eyes could see through the bushes as he stared at the girls and Mace and listened in on their conversation. The gorilla had been quite interested in hearing what had been said and now he didn't need to hear anything anymore, he got up from behind the bush and scampered off on his knuckles and feet. The gorilla was a silverback gorilla, quite literally since he had a silver streak of fur down his back that seemed to have an abnormally silver shine to it. He was dressed only in a pair of leopard skin shorts and he had a museum of scars all over his arms and face. Clearly he'd been into many fights in his life time. His eyes were a fiery orange colour and his muscle structure was slightly larger than the average gorilla. He ran through the jungle and he skidded to a halt just before a campsite that he lived in. The camp was full of wooden houses that housed several other types of gorilla in the Lost Jungle and the trees themselves were equipped with an array of accessories such as slides, jungle vines to swing to and fro from, platforms that you could land on after swinging from tree to tree, swings made out of vines that the baby gorillas loved to play on, wooden see-saws that were always a joy to play on as well and even custom made tables and chairs that the gorillas could sit at and eat off of like ordinary people. It seemed strange for gorillas to live in such a civilian looking habitat like this but the gorillas loved it. They had been inspired by somebody to make their home like this though and that somebody was sitting on a throne made out of bamboo sticks and lion fur to add more comfort to it. The gorilla bowed down to the person on the throne. The person was a woman but oddly enough, it wasn't a gorilla at all. It was a female squirrel! The squirrel was the living image of the stereotypical jungle girl. She only wore a tiger skin skirt that was wrapped around her pelvis and on her wrists and ankles, she bore leopard skin wristbands and ankle bands that she admired greatly. Her breasts were uncovered, not that it mattered since nobody cared how you presented yourself in the jungle. Her hair was very unusual. It was a bright blonde colour and she had two ends of her hair tied together under her chin, making it look like she had something akin to a lion's mane. Unlike Sally

Acorn, her tail was big and bushy and she seemed quite proud of it. Her fur was brown and her eyes were green. She had a scarily fierce expression on her face as if she was embracing the life of a jungle predator and wouldn't be afraid to bite somebody if she had to. The squirrel presumably had lived in the jungle her whole life. The throne she sat in was a big enough indicator as to what her role in this gorilla tribe was. She was their leader. Their queen perhaps and there was obviously a reason as to why she had been chosen to rule the tribe. She showed no emotion as the gorilla bowed down to her.

"Kay, what brings you before me then my loyal subject?" asked the squirrel in a husky voice that emoted power and control in every vocal her throat emitted.

"I have come across a bunch of Mobians my lady." said the gorilla whom the squirrel referred to as Kay "One of them is named Sally Acorn and she seems to be here to destroy the refuelling station that we're trying to bring down. She has a device called "Nicole" and she's using it to track down the location of the station."

"Excellent Kay!" cried the squirrel excitedly "This "Sally Acorn" woman will make the perfect bait for those robots in the station! We'll use her to bring out the guards and leave the station defenceless! Then we shall take it over and use it for spare parts! I bet our camp would look grand with the station's weaponry all around it."

"Indeed it would Queen Abby." said Kay agreeably "Be warned though, Sally seems to have sharp blades on her. She cuts through the vegetation as if it's nothing."

"We'll be careful Kay, we are very careful fighters after all." said Abby in a voice dripping with arrogance and confidence all rolled into one "Never has a gorilla been felled in a battle I've planned out. Find me Sally Acorn and bring her to me at once. Take the cage with you, I'd rather have her contained so she doesn't attempt to attack me…or my lovely subjects either." she said, her voice now kinder sounding.

"I shall get the cage and take a squadron with me." said Kay with a

bow "I promise you, we will bring back Sally."

"I know my darling Kaye…" purred Abby, getting up off her throne and embracing the gorilla as if she was his lifelong partner "You never fail your dear old Queen Abby now do you? I'm counting on you to accomplish this task and I know you'll have no difficulty."

"Thank you Abby." said Kay, embracing Abby back "See you later, I'll be back soon."

Abby waved Kay goodbye as Kay ran off around the camp to round up some gorillas to take with him to capture Sally Acorn. He rounded up his squadron and soon eight gorillas left the camp, two of them carrying a huge wooden cage with four poles, two at the front and two at the back, between them. Abby watched as the gorillas left the camp and she sat back down on her throne, waiting patiently for her beloved gorillas to return. As she waited, a nagging thought began to bite away at her brain.

Sally Acorn…why do I feel like I know that name?

Abby shrugged it off, dismissing it as nothing more than a silly thought. Sally was just going to be bait for her plans and she wasn't going to let her slip through her fingers so easily. Kaye would have her and he would be back with Sally caught and caged before she could say "Bananas and Mangoes"…

Meanwhile, Sally, Bunnie and Mace had been travelling through the forest for roughly half an hour. Sally had been busily slashing away at bushes that grew ridiculously thick and loomed in front of them and vines that hung down low as if trying to touch them for some reason. Who needed a jungle knife when you had two energy blades like Sally's? Mace had been impressed with how effectively Sally's blades were working. The blades seemed to cleave through the vegetation as if it wasn't really here. One slash and then suddenly the bush would collapse down onto the ground as if escaping from its stalk.

"Those blades of yours sure are cool your majesty! Where did you

get them?" asked Mace.

"Tails, being the kind hearted little fox he is, made them especially for me." said Sally brightly "I used to fight with a staff but the staff was a bit impractical so Tails gave me these arm blades. They're very effective though, much better than the staff. I can cut through just about anything."

"Bet you're not easy to capture should any villain target you." laughed Mace "You'll chop them to pieces before they get near you!"

"Ah ha, ha, ha…not exactly." chuckled Sally "I've still needed help on occasion but in a battle, these blades definitely are very effective."

"They sure are Sally-girl." said Bunnie happily "Ah bet ah'd be pretty mean with an energy blade mah self. But ah think mah weaponry's good enough as it is. Ah don't need any durn upgrades or new weapons yet."

"I haven't really had time to learn about you Royal Fighters I'm sorry to say." said Mace sadly "What weaponry do you have Bunnie?"

"Mah robotic arm can extend, make a laser cannon or make a shield generator." explained Bunnie "Ah can fight AND defend both at once! Isn't that more awesome than a firework factory goin' kaboom sugah?"

"I actually want to see you in action hearing what you've just told me Bunnie." said Mace with a grin that said to Bunnie he was very impressed with what she'd told him "That sounds pretty cool. Heck, I think I might be tempted to have a strength contest with ya!"

"Believe me Mace, ya'll ain't the first person to do that." laughed Bunnie "Because of mah robot arm, a lot of people want to give me strength tests for some reason. Maybe see if muscle is better than machine?"

"Maybe." said Mace casually "Either way, I bet you're an amazing fighter in the battlefield Bunnie."

"Ya'll will be very impressed Mace, that's all ah can tell you." said

Bunnie with a wink.

Mace smiled back at Bunnie. It was one of the things he liked about the fact he'd joined the R.F.S. now, he was meeting and talking with some very interesting people and Bunnie was definitely a person he was interested in now. He wondered what the rest of the Royal Fighters were like.

"So Mace, how's things been going with yer family?" asked Bunnie "Last we saw of ya, ya'll had gone off to deliver yer reward money to them."

"Things have been going great." said Mace brightly "My family are out of poverty and we've been spending the money very carefully to avoid going back into poverty. They're very grateful to Sally for giving me all that money just for me to give back to them and they wanted me to give her my regards should I see her again."

"Tell your family they're very welcome." said Sally sweetly "It was my pleasure to give you such a well-deserved reward."

Mace gave Sally the thumbs up in return and Sally returned to what she was doing. She peered at Nicole and noticed that her screen was telling her that they were thirty minutes away from the refuelling station.

"Wow, we've been walking for half an hour already?" Sally mused under her breath "Time really does fly by when you're engrossed in something. We'll be at the station in no time…"

Sally suddenly paused as a banana suddenly hurled in front of her and landed on the ground before her with a thud. Sally deactivated her blade and she picked up the banana. She noticed that the banana seemed to have a message on it. She read the message. It said:

Please help. Gorilla tribe needs your help. Eggman robots are attacking our village. There's a map on the back of the note. Please come to us and save us!

Obfuscation was all that Sally could feel right now. Why would some

random gorilla tribe ask her for help and her specifically? Still, if they needed help then they needed help and she was not somebody who would refuse a request for help. Sally decided she would go and help those poor gorillas and save their village. But she couldn't abandon her mission to destroy the refuelling station either. The Eggman robots would just keep coming and attacking the gorillas if the station remained standing and even if any escaped her, they'd just retreat back to the station and then repair themselves so they could come back and attack again. Sally began to consider the options. She could easily go and save the gorillas but let Bunnie and Mace destroy the station for her. And even if they didn't, she'd just use Nicole to track down Bunnie and Mace and rejoin with them so she could help finish the job. Sally made her decision and she turned around to face Bunnie. Bunnie picked up signals that something wasn't quite right from Sally's expression.

"Sally-girl, what's wrong?" asked Bunnie.

"I just got a banana with a message on it." explained Sally, showing Bunnie the banana with the message she'd received "A tribe of gorillas need help and I'm going to give them a hand. I'm sorry to abandon you like this but I put the safety of the people before anything else."

"We understand." said Bunnie "Do you have to go alone though?"

"I do." said Sally in a tone of voice that suggested she had made her decision and it was final, no more questions asked "We still need to take down the refuelling station. The gorillas are being attacked by Eggman robots apparently and if we take them down, the refuelling station will just have more to send in. You and Mace find the refuelling station while I save the gorillas. Take this…"

She paused as she took something out from underneath Nicole and handed it to Bunnie. It was a round circular disc with a flashing red light on it and it seemed to attach to Bunnie's robotic arm like a magnet.

"It's a tracking beacon." explained Sally "With Nicole, I'll be able to find you and Mace once you find the station."

"But if you're taking Nicole, how will we find it?" asked Mace "She's the one leading us to the station!"

"According to Nicole's directions, the station is literally just thirty minutes away." explained Sally as she glanced at the screen "Just keep going straight for thirty minutes and you'll find it."

"I'll remember that." said Mace "Good luck in saving those gorillas Sally."

"Yeah Sally-girl, please be careful." said Bunnie concernedly "We don't wanna lose ya'll out here in the jungle."

"I'll be fine Bunnie." Sally reassured "Nicole will warn me of any danger and I have weapons sufficient enough to get out of whatever trouble comes my way. I'll make it out alive, don't you worry."

"Ah think ah can see why sugah-hog fell for ya Sally." chuckled Bunnie, winking at her mischievously.

Sally blushed at Bunnie's remark to which Mace tried his hardest not to laugh at. Sally could see him shaking and grinning stupidly as he forced his mouth to keep shut and hold in the laugh he was tempted to let out. Grinning and shaking her head, Sally turned around and left for the location that the note had mapped out for her. She'd taken the note off of the banana and could see that there was indeed a map on the back and it was leading her to another part of the Lost Jungle. Mace and Bunnie watched as Sally disappeared into some thick bushes, following the directions on the map and heading to where the gorillas supposedly were. As Sally left, Bunnie and Mace continued walking forwards as per Sally's instructions. Just go forwards for thirty minutes and they would find what they were looking for. It seemed simple enough. As they walked though, Bunnie expressed some concern that she couldn't quite shake off.

"Hey Mace, am ah the only one who's a little concerned about what Sally's getting' herself into?" she asked aloud "Ah mean why was there a message for her in particular? And are ya sure a tribe of gorillas know who she is like?"

"Likely." said Mace "The Royal Fighters are well-known the world

over are they not? Mazuri is no exception. Pretty much everybody in my village has heard of the R.F.S."

"Ah see but ah still can't shake off the feelin' that somethin's not quite right here." Bunnie mused as her eyes narrowed into an expression of deep thought and concern "Ah don't know what it is but ah can't quite put mah finger on it."

"You're just getting jumpy Bunnie." said Mace dismissively "I'm sure it's nothing. Why would gorillas send Sally a message if they didn't need help?"

"Maybe but ah still feel like somethin's wrong…" murmured Bunnie "Ah maybe gettin' a bit jumpier than a kangaroo with sore feet but still, you can't overestimate yer feelings. They maybe like that for a reason."

"Fair enough." said Mace agreeably "When I was with Brawn, I had a nagging feeling that he was the wrong man to join with. And wouldn't you know it? That feeling was right…" his face fell as terrible memories of working with Brawn and his mice-hating rat friends began to come back to him.

"Ah bet it was terrible working for that guy..." muttered Bunnie "Kidnappin' Mandy and Kari and forcin' them to be slaves like that...how vile can some people get?"

"It sickens me as to how evil some people can be." Mace shuddered and screwed his face up in disgust "I'm glad I turned on Brawn and killed the bastard. He deserved what he got."

The pleasant image of him throwing Brawn onto a hook and killing him crept into his head. Just thinking about Brawn's death seemed to be enough to make him feel better. Probably not the best thought to make somebody feel better but Mace didn't consider it the happiest thought on his mind at least. The happiest thought on his mind was his family being out of poverty at last and having a better life. As for Bunnie, she could understand why Mace felt that way. It must be horrible she thought to work for a villain even though your intentions were good and your idea of raising money for your family wasn't enslaving innocent mice and rats. The fact Mace was now a

Royal Fighter more than made things better for the elephant.

"Ah'm sure Brawn did deserve what he got." said Bunnie "But ya'll don't have to think about him now Mace. Just think about what a good thing ya'll are doin' for the Royal Fighters now. Yer joinin' me and Sally in a mission to destroy a Death Egg refuelling station."

"That alone makes me feel like I'm doing something worthwhile." Mace beamed happily.

As he and Bunnie talked together, they failed to realize that they were being watched. Kay had suspected that Bunnie and Mace would carry on with the mission while they tried to capture Sally and thus, he'd sent a scout to slow the two down. They wanted the refuelling station for their own reasons and they thought that if the Royal Fighters destroyed it, they wouldn't get to use the parts they wanted for their camp. The scout was a brown furred gorilla who wasn't as big as Kay but he was no less powerful. The scout smiled as he watched Bunnie and Mace from up in a tree. He knew exactly how to slow the two down and give his Queen Abby and the other gorillas time to get to the station first. He had a bunch of mangoes tucked under his arms and he had one ready to throw. He aimed at Bunnie's head and he threw the mango. The mango whizzed through the air and hit Bunnie in the back of her head with a splat. It almost felt like being punched due to how hard the gorilla threw the mango. Bunnie wheeled around and she glared up at the trees.

"Oy! Who threw that?!" she demanded angrily.

"Some cheeky monkey no doubt." muttered Mace "Come on Bunnie, ignore it. We have a job to do."

The gorilla then proceeded to throw a mango at him too. The mango hit Mace with a messy splat in the back of his head. Mace turned around and pointed up at the trees.

"Hey, go bother somebody else!" he growled "We haven't got time for any monkey business!"

The gorilla chortled mockingly at Mace and Bunnie and he began to throw all his mangoes at them. The two Royal Fighters were

bombarded from all over by mangoes and they soon ended up being very messy indeed. Pieces of mango and mango juice dripped from their bodies and faces and Bunnie had some bits in her hair. Bunnie lost her temper and she raised her fists.

"Now just try that again you..."

She was rudely cut off as the gorilla threw another mango into her face. He'd kept that one for just the occasion. The gorilla just started hooting with laughter as Bunnie wiped mango off of her face and she glared up at the trees. She could see the gorilla dancing around on the tree branch and clapping as if this was some really funny show for him. Funny for him perhaps but not to Bunnie and Mace.

"Alright you pesky critter, ya'll asked for it!" yelled Bunnie angrily "Ah'm comin' ta get ya for that!"

"Bunnie, leave that gorilla alone!" cried Mace "It's just messing with us! They always do that, it's not worth getting involved with them..."

He soon ended up eating those words as the gorilla grabbed a grapefruit from the tree he was standing on and he threw it at Mace. The grapefruit was enormous, much larger than a mango and as the grapefruit hit Mace, he actually felt his head lurch backwards a little. He remained standing despite the force of the hit but he had a face full of grapefruit. Fuming, Mace wiped his face clean and he did his best not to lose his cool. Bunnie however had had enough. She took to the skies with the rockets in her metal feet blazing and she flew up towards the gorilla. This took the gorilla by surprise for he hadn't expected Bunnie to be able to fly but he was ready for her. He had another grapefruit in his hand and he splattered it in Bunnie's face as she flew up towards him. This caused Bunnie to dive-bomb down into the ground with a face full of grapefruit. Growling angrily, Bunnie picked herself up and wiped her face clean. She watched as the gorilla made horrible, rude faces at her and even started shaking his bum at her. Then with a cheeky yell at her, the gorilla took to the trees and started swinging away.

"OK, nobody makes a monkey outta me!" screeched Bunnie "Ya'll are gonna pay for that!"

Before Mace could stop her, Bunnie flew off after the gorilla and gave chase. Sighing loudly, Mace started running after Bunnie. Like it or not, he had to abandon the mission for he couldn't let Bunnie get lost out into the jungle like this. He ran after Bunnie, hoping he could keep up with her and the gorilla. Mace was a fast runner as are most elephants but gorillas were fast swingers and Bunnie was a fast flier. He had a feeling this could go on for a while. They'd have a lot of explaining to do should Sally get to the refuelling station and find out that they weren't there to meet her...

Meanwhile, Sally had followed the directions on the map that the banana's message had come with and she soon found herself in a clearing where there was a wide patch of ground that seemed to have all of the trees and vegetation standing around it as if the ground had pushed them to the side. Sally looked puzzled and she glanced down at the map. The map told her the gorilla's village was right here where she was standing now. It didn't look like much of a village. There was just a patch of ground with surrounding bushes and trees with a streak of sunlight shining through them. There was nothing even remotely resembling a village here and Sally also took note of the lack of any Eggman robots around or even a fight in general for that matter. Everything was peaceful here. No signs of a fight at all. Sally's brow furrowed in suspicion. For a tribe of gorillas that needed her help, it sure didn't look like they needed any. Sally put her free hand on her hip and glanced down at Nicole whom she held in her other hand.

"This certainly doesn't look like a gorilla tribe in need of help." muttered Sally "It looks pretty calm to me. Can you detect any Eggman robots around at all?"

"Negative Sally, there are no Eggman robots in this area. We are completely alone." said Nicole, taking Sally by surprise at how quick her response had been. The scan had literally taken milliseconds and had been done the moment Sally finished talking.

"Well that's strange." said Sally grimly "Why did I get a message from a tribe of gorillas asking for help if there's no village here and there aren't any Eggman robots?"

"I think we've been tricked." said Nicole gravely "We should go now before anything happens."

"I bet an Eggman robot faked that message just to try and trap me." muttered Sally "Well it isn't going to work. We'll turn back and catch up with Bunnie and Mace. Gah what a waste of time this was..."

"You couldn't help it Sally." said Nicole softly "It's a natural instinct to answer a call for help, especially when that somebody has a heart as big as you. It was perfectly understandable for you to react the way you did."

"I guess so." said Sally, turning around and preparing to walk away.

She felt a bit angry with herself for allowing herself to fall for what should have been seen as an obvious trap. The trap may not have been that obvious but Sally still felt she should have realized that it was a trap. Luckily, she hadn't sprung it and she was now walking away before it could get her. What a story to deliver to Bunnie and Mace this would be! But as Sally started to walk away, she heard something rustle in the bushes and she stopped dead in her tracks. Sally turned around and listened out as the rustling continued.

"Hello? Is there someone here?" asked Sally nervously.

The rustling continued but Sally received no response to her question. Sally put Nicole onto her boot and she deployed her energy blades. She gulped nervously. When you're out in the jungle, you never know what you'll come across. There could be a wild animal waiting to pounce on her any moment. She felt a lot safer with her blades deployed. At least she had something to fight with. But Sally should have kept her senses tuned for anything that could appear behind her too. She had been too focused on what was ahead of her and that was the biggest mistake she'd made. A mistake big enough to get her captured. Jumping down from the trees above, a huge shape landed down beside Sally and just as Sally turned around to see what was happening, she was knocked out cold by a terrific backhand across the face. To Sally it felt like being whacked by a sack of bricks. Sally fell down onto her back with a thud and her eyes closed. The blades switched off for her fists were no longer clenched. The thing that had knocked her out

stepped forward and shook Sally gently to see if she was knocked out. Sally didn't stir. She lay still and didn't move. Satisfied, the thing unclipped her wristbands so she wouldn't be able to use her blades to fend him off. Then the thing picked up Sally's unconscious body and carried her away…

Sally woke up just a few minutes later. She had been in a dream where she and Sonic were having a lovely date together but now she was beginning to hear noises and now she was beginning to come around. She could even feel something too. It was an odd feeling. It felt like she was moving up and down slightly and that she was being carried on something. But what? Sally rubbed her aching head tenderly with her fingertips as she came out of her slumber and the pain from the blow that had knocked her out began to kick in. Her brain felt like it was being hammered from inside her skull. What on Mobius had knocked her out? Whatever it was, Sally knew that she hadn't avoided the trap after all. It had sprung and it had caught her. Where was she now? Sally allowed a few seconds to pass so her headache could ease up and then she sat up. She soon realized what she felt like she was being carried on something. Because she was being carried, but she was IN something rather than on it. Sally noticed that there were a bunch of wooden bars all around her and a wooden ceiling above her head. It was high up enough so she could stand up straight. Underneath her was a wooden floor and there were two very long poles stretching out underneath the floor. A gorilla was holding the front ends of the poles while another gorilla held the back end and between them, they were carrying Sally through the jungle inside this wooden cage that she was trapped in. Sally fumed ever so furiously to herself. She'd been stupid enough to fall for such an obvious trap and now she'd been caught and was being carried away by a couple of gorillas. But the gorillas had asked Sally for her help? Why had they trapped her in a cage? Maybe the gorillas were the ones that had laid the trap for her and now they were taking her to Dr. Eggman or somebody. Why were they working for Eggman? If they weren't working for Eggman than who were they working for? Why did they kidnap her like this? Sally had no idea and she had so many questions to get answers for. She got up onto her knees and gripped

onto the bars.

"Hey! What's the meaning of this?" demanded Sally angrily "Let me outta here!"

"No can do Acorn girl, we've been asked by our queen to fetch you and that's what we're going to do." said the gorilla in front of her.

"Why? What have I done to you gorillas to deserve this?" asked Sally indignantly "Why am I a prisoner? Are you working for Dr. Eggman or something?"

"No, we curse Eggman's name!" snarled the gorilla "We serve only our queen and she wants you Sally and she'll let you know why when you meet her."

"How do you know my name?" asked Sally in shock.

"I told them." said a gorilla who was walking ahead of the two gorillas carrying Sally's cage "I am Kay and I'm the queen's right hand man. I was sent to capture you and bring you to her Sally. As for how I know your name, I overheard you using it earlier."

"Why does your queen want me?" questioned Sally.

"She wants you to help her with something." explained Kay.

"Then why am I trapped in a cage?!" screeched Sally "Couldn't she just politely ask me to help her out instead of treating me like some kind of prisoner?!"

"She'd rather you were contained for you might not like what she has in store for you…" said Kay dryly "Now shut up before I knock you out again."

The delivery of that line made Sally shudder. How anyone could deliver a line such as that in such a clam and flat tone was beyond her. Kay was definitely not somebody to be trifled with and she could tell from how serious he looked that she shouldn't try and get on his nerves. Nevertheless, Sally wasn't going to play damsel-in-distress and wait for somebody to rescue her. She clenched her fists to activate her energy blades. But to her dismay, they weren't

activating. Sally looked down at her wrists and realized that the wristbands were gone. But Sally had another method of escape instead. She took Nicole off her boot and opened up her screen. She thumbed a key on her keypad and out from underneath Nicole appeared a little circular saw blade that Sally had personally installed in there herself as a little contingency plan. She held it to one of the bars only to have Kay suddenly stop, turn around and walk up to her. The gorillas carried on walking so Kay walked alongside the cage and glared at Sally.

"Dare try to escape and I will break your legs." he growled "I'm warning you."

Sally scowled at Kay but she knew better than to anger a gorilla. Plus she needed her legs if she had any chance of escaping so she decided to abandon her escape plan. She sheathed Nicole's saw blade and put the little computer back on her boot.

"Have it your way then big head." she muttered, trying to show that she wasn't intimidated by Kay in the slightest.

Kay ignored her and he resumed his position as the leading gorilla in this escorting process. They had nearly arrived back at the camp now so there was no need to talk to Sally anymore. Sally just sat down in the cage and waited for the gorillas to arrive at where they were taking her. She really wondered why the gorilla queen was so interested in her in particular and what she could possibly want with Sally that required her to be locked in a cage. It just didn't make sense to her one little bit. Sally assumed she would find all the answers once the gorillas arrived at their destination. In a few minutes, the gorillas arrived at their destination. Sally looked around and saw that this was likely the gorilla's REAL village. It surprised her to see that it looked so much like a real village though. The houses and play equipment astounded her and she found herself almost admiring what the gorillas lived in. It was the ultimate jungle playground and village all at once. If she was stranded out in the jungle, she'd definitely want to end up here when looking for a place to stay. The gorillas set the cage down on the floor and Sally stood up, her hands closed around the bars as she tried to see over the gorillas and spot the queen anywhere. None of the gorillas stood out to her as the queen in this tribe so maybe the queen was in a house

or something. The gorillas all bowed down quite suddenly and Sally watched as Kay bowed down respectfully. She looked ahead and saw that a squirrel was walking up towards the gorillas. It was Abby, smiling graciously at her loyal subjects. Sally was a little confused. Why were the gorillas bowing down to this squirrel girl? Was she their queen or something? Very unusual indeed. She'd expected a gorilla with a crown on her head but instead, there was a squirrel in a tiger skin skirt and her hair tied together in a lion's mane around her head standing before the bowing gorillas. She really had to know how this girl ended up ruling over a tribe of gorillas. Abby strode over to Kay and ordered him out of the way. She put her hands on her hips and grinned at Sally maniacally. She looked eerily pleased to have Sally as her prisoner for some reason. As Sally studied Abby's face, she began to feel odd about her. She felt like…she knew this squirrel. But why? Abby turned to Kay, her smile more evil looking than a crocodile's as she spoke to him.

"Well done my lovely Kay." she purred, patting him on the head like he was some loyal lapdog "You did exactly as I'd ordered and you got me Sally Acorn. I knew you would succeed."

"Thank you your majesty." said Kay loyally.

Sally gasped. She DID know this girl! Her husky voice brought back so many memories for her and Sally could hardly keep the surprise out of her face. Abby strode up to the cage and put a hand against the bars.

"Hello Sally." she said sinisterly as if she was greeting an old friend rather than a stranger "So glad you could join me and my gorillas today. We've got a special job for you."

"Abby!" gasped Sally "But…but that's impossible! I thought you were dead!"

Abby froze as if Sally had just slapped her across the face. She stared at Sally as if trying to read her and she folded her arms.

"How the heck do you know my name?" growled Abby "And what gave you any right to think I was dead?! We've never met before! I only know YOUR name thanks to Kay here!"

"Abby, it's me Sally Acorn! Your cousin! Remember?" Sally blustered "We were quite close when we were kids but when you turned thirteen, you went on a jungle expedition with mom and dad and you never came back! That was four years ago! You must remember me Abby!"

Abby didn't look convinced in the slightest. Her face was a scowl of disbelief and her arms were still folded. She shook her head disapprovingly.

"I've never heard such nonsense in all my life." snorted Abby "We're not related in anyway! I was born and raised here in the jungle by my family of gorillas. I have no memory of you being in my life at all, nor do I have any memory of being in YOUR life."

"Abby, it's the truth I swear!" cried Sally "Please, you have to believe me!"

"Give me a good reason why I should." said Abby coldly "I'm not seeing any evidence that proves I'm related to you."

"Kay, how did Abby come to be your queen?" asked Sally desperately, hoping that Kay would give her the answers.

"That's none of your business." snapped Kay "And the queen is not interested in sharing her past story with a lowly prisoner such as yourself."

"Is it really none of my business or are you just denying the truth?" asked Sally coldly "You must know something about Abby that she doesn't."

"ENOUGH!" barked Abby "This is a pointless discussion! We're wasting daylight! Let's just forget about all this nonsense about me and Sally being "related" and move onto the important business. Like our plan to take over that refuelling station we've been trying to get our hands on for days!"

"Did you say…refuelling station?" Sally gasped in surprise.

"Yes I did Sally." sneered Abby "I bet it means something to you since Kay tells me you're trying to track down the station yourself.

Well fortuitously for you, WE know where it is. And you're coming with us to help us take it over."

"I am?" said Sally is astonishment "What do you need me for?"

Abby smiled like a tiger that's about to pounce on its prey and she reached into Sally's cage. Grabbing Sally by the cheek and pressing her face against the bars, Abby stared directly into Sally's worried eyes.

"You're the bait to drive out the guards." explained Abby "You see, the guards are too much for poor me and my gorillas so we're willing to sacrifice a worthless life such as your own in order to get past the guards and into the station. Once the guards are busy killing you, we'll attack them from behind and smash them all to pieces! While some of my gorillas destroy the robots, me, Kay and some more gorillas will storm the station and take it apart! We'll take whatever pieces we desire and decorate our camp with them. The weapons on the station will be a wonderful defence against anyone who attacks our camp and the metal plating of the station will make our homes stronger and hardier. It's the perfect plan and now we have you, it's bound to work!"

She did a little excited dance and laughed childishly as she pictured her beautiful plan working to perfection. Sally thought her heart was going to stop beating. She was being used as bait to draw out the refuelling station's guards while the gorillas took apart the station and used the pieces for themselves?! Sally couldn't let her life be sacrificed so cruelly! She had to try and talk Abby out of this!

"Abby…please, you can't do this to me!" fretted Sally "Please, I beg of you! Your plan won't work! The guards will know it's a trap! They won't take the bait! Let me out of this cage and let me join you in your assault! I'm more valuable to you as part of the attack force than bait! Please listen to me and let me be part of your attack force!"

"Who's the queen around here?" snarled Abby furiously "I am! And all ways here go MY way! Nobody else's! I made up a plan and the plan won't change! You're the bait, and that's final!"

"Abby please!" shrieked Sally.

"Not another word out of you, you annoying sod or I'll kill you myself!" growled Abby "And I think I'll use your own weapons to do so!"

Kay handed her the wristbands and the jungle squirrel clipped them on around her wrists. She clenched her fists and to her surprise, that seemed to activate the blades. Abby was marvelled by the sight of the glowing energy blades that extended under her arms and hands. She swung them around gleefully and she laughed delightedly.

"These are wonderful!" she cried "I could use them against the guards! And if Sally steps out of line…I'll use them on her."

She shot the squirrel queen a dirty glare that made Sally realize that there was no reasoning with her. Abby was one of those people who made a decision and her decision was final, no questions asked. Sally decided not to say another word lest she be killed by Abby. Pleased that Sally had decided to be quiet now, Abby pointed at her gorilla tribe.

"The plan is to be carried out my lovely subjects." she announced "Onwards to the refuelling station and away! Victory will finally be ours!"

The gorillas whooped and pounded their chests in excitement as the plan was finally ready to carry out. Two gorillas picked up Sally's cage and Abby ran off ahead with Kay lumbering behind her. The rest of the gorillas followed Abby and Kay and the entire tribe ran off into the jungle with their bait in hand. Sally allowed herself to be carried away and did nothing but sit there and wait for herself to be delivered to the refuelling station. It seemed this would be it. She would be plonked down in front of the station and likely executed by any Eggman robots on guard. And to think she'd survived much worse than this before. Sally could do nothing but pray that Bunnie and Mace were already at the station waiting for her and they would save her once the gorillas arrived. If they weren't then Sally truly was dead…and Sonic would never be the same hedgehog again once he heard about her death…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 188**

**** You know which story I'm talking about. ;) See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 161-163**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 168**

Oh dear! Sally's going to be bait in a plan to take over the Death Egg refuelling station and it seems she has no way of escaping! How will she get out of this one? Will Bunnie and Mace stop monkeying around long enough to save her? Find out next time in Part 2...

Welcome to the Jungle Sally Acorn 2

Arc 26: Welcome to the Jungle Sally Acorn

Takes place during Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 190-191

Part 2: Gorilla Warfare

It's truly astounding how ah can beat up Eggman robots and have taken on deadly opponents like Ravage Bloodfang, Marik the Martian and many a Devatron warrior and yet ah can't seem to catch up to this stupid gorilla!

Bunnie Rabbot thought this as she was sent plummeting yet again into the ground below with a face full of grapefruit. She'd been flying after this gorilla and trying to catch him after it had decided to start throwing fruit at her and Mace the Elephant, who had joined up with her on this occasion. Bunnie was here in the Lost Jungle on an important mission. A Death Egg refuelling station had been located in the Lost Jungle by Nicole after Queen Sally Acorn had managed to use her to hack into the Egg-Bunker's main computer and find out where the rest of the refuelling stations were.* Sally, Bunnie and Mace were going to destroy the station together but Sally had received a message on a banana telling her that a tribe of gorillas needed help. So Sally had gone off to help the gorillas and just as she'd left, a gorilla had started throwing fruit at Bunnie and Mace. He was meant to slow the two down and stop them from destroying the refuelling station for the gorillas wanted it for their own needs. He was doing a good job too. He'd riled Bunnie up very badly and despite Mace's protesting, the Rabbot had lost her wick and was now chasing the gorilla. The gorilla had grabbed a grapefruit and let Bunnie have it directly in the face to which Bunnie now found herself crashing down into the ground again. The gorilla chortled mockingly at Bunnie and started clapping excitedly. Bunnie picked herself up as Mace ground to a halt and brushed her off.

"You OK Bunnie?" asked Mace.

"Apart from the fact ah've got a face full of fruit again, ah'm just fine." muttered Bunnie "That little critter is really startin' ta tick me off!"

"I told you to ignore it." sighed Mace "It's just trying to get attention. A lot of apes and monkeys in the jungle act like this, gorillas being no exception. You're just giving that gorilla some entertainment. Don't let it have that satisfaction, we have a job to do."

"Ah know but we can do without that annoying gorilla throwing fruit at us while we're trying to destroy the refuelling station!" snapped Bunnie "Ah mean, if we carried on and ignored that gorilla, it would have just followed us and kept throwing fruit at us! Ah just think it needs to get the message that we're not in the mood for his monkey business!"

She sighed as she was hit in the back of her head by a mango. Wiping the mango off, she scooped up a fistful of dirt, rolled it into a ball and threw it at the gorilla with her robot arm. The gorilla was astounded by how hard Bunnie could throw. So hard in fact it didn't even get to see the dirt ball until it hit him in the face. The gorilla howled in rage as he was hit by the dirt ball. He was not used to having things thrown back at him and as you know, gorillas take very little prompting to get riled. They're among the most ill-tempered of animals and Mobian Gorillas were no exception to this little rule of the animal kingdom. Throwing a dirt ball into its face was enough to anger this gorilla. The gorilla thumped his chest loudly and he swung over onto a banana tree. He grabbed a bunch of bananas and aimed one at Bunnie as Bunnie ran to keep up with it. He squeezed on the edge of the banana, shooting it directly out of its skin and towards Bunnie. However Bunnie had had just about enough of being splattered by fruit so she deployed her shield generator and blocked the attack. The gorilla looked shocked at the face Bunnie blocked his shooting banana. He decided to throw them at Mace instead since he was unguarded. He aimed at Mace and threw a banana at him. The banana hit Mace but due to the fact it was still in its peel, it didn't splatter all over his face. It just hit him but fell away onto the ground. Mace didn't even feel that hit. He just smiled mockingly at the gorilla as if to say "Go ahead, hit me again. You won't hurt me." The gorilla seemed to take offence by Mace's smug expression so he threw the entire bunch at Mace. Mace

swung his trunk and knocked the bananas away. The gorilla looked nervous and he started swinging off again. Bunnie took to the skies as quickly as she could and she deployed her arm cannon. She knew exactly how to stop the gorilla this time. She waited until the gorilla reached out for another vine and she shot at the vine just as the gorilla grabbed onto it. The timing was perfect. The shot singed the vine and due to how heavy the gorilla was, the vine made no attempt to hold the weight. It snapped in two and the gorilla plunged down onto the ground. He picked himself up and scampered off as frantically as possible but Mace charged after the gorilla. A charging elephant is not easy to outrun and the gorilla could see that as Mace started closing the distance between the two. The gorilla leapt onto another tree and started climbing but Mace lowered his head and slammed into the tree, making it shake vigorously and causing the gorilla to fall down onto the ground. The gorilla tried to run away again but Mace grabbed his ankles and tripped him up. The gorilla was helpless to stop Mace as the elephant hauled him up as if he weighed nothing and he threw him against another tree. Before the gorilla could move, Bunnie landed down in front of him and pointed her arm cannon at the gorilla. The gorilla covered his face in fright and started whimpering like a little baby.

"Alright you irritating little primate, why are ya'll throwin' fruit at us?!" growled Bunnie "We didn't do nothin' ta you!"

"P-p-please, don't hurt me!" squealed the gorilla, his voice very high-pitched and frightened sounding.

"Answer ma questions and I'll spare ya'll any pain." said Bunnie firmly "Now why are ya'll pickin' on us?!"

"I was told to, by Kay the lead gorilla!" whimpered the gorilla "He wanted me to distract you two so he and the tribe could get to the refuelling station first!"

"Why do you want the refuelling station?" demanded Bunnie "Are ya'll workin' for Eggman and yer tryin' ta keep us away from the station?"

"No! Honest to god no!" shrieked the gorilla "We hate Eggman! He tried to roboticize us last year! We spit on him! That station of his is

ruining the scenery and we just want to take it apart and use its parts to make our camp stronger and hardier!"

"Then why didn't ya'll just tell us that?!" retorted Bunnie angrily "We would have been happy to help you with that task! Ya'll just wasted our time for nothin' ya dumb ape!"

"Well excuse me for following orders ma'am!" snapped the gorilla "I was told to distract you, ergo, I distracted you! And besides, you wanted to destroy the station completely! We wouldn't have any pieces of it left to use for our camp if we let you go ahead with that!"

"Well if you just decided to tell me what you gorillas wanted the station for instead of antagonizing us for no reason, we would have changed our mission and instead, help you take the station apart and gather what ya'll wanted!" yelled Bunnie "Seriously, ya'll really bring home the meaning of the name "Banana Brains"!"

The gorilla was about to argue again but he suddenly realized that Bunnie actually had a point. They could have just told Bunnie what they wanted the station for and saved themselves a load of bother. Now he really did feel stupid for not thinking about that at the time. His face fell into a face of regret.

"You know what…you're right." said the gorilla solemnly "I really am stupid aren't I? So sorry about all that miss."

"Ah'll let ya off sugah." said Bunnie, her expression much calmer and more softer now "After all, we all have times where we don't really think about things. Even me and mah friends can overlook certain details that end up making more sense in the long run. So, ya'll know where the station is ah assume?"

"Oh yes." said the gorilla "To make up for my gaff, I'll take you straight to it."

He then suddenly realized something.

"Oh no! Your friend Sally!" he gasped "Kay and the others must have captured her by now! They might be delivering her to the refuelling station now!"

"Wait what? What's the matter?" asked Bunnie.

"Kay set up a trap for your friend Sally Acorn." explained the gorilla "The banana with the message was part of the trap. It was a bogus message to led her straight to them. They want to use somebody as bait to draw the guards out while they ransack the station and Sally was the one they wanted to use! They must be on their way to the station right now and are ready to sacrifice her to the guards!"

"Oh mah stars!" shrieked Bunnie "We've gotta get there now and save Sally! Please sugah, lead the way!"

"Sure thing! Follow me! Fast as you can!" cried the gorilla.

He took to the trees and he started swinging through the vines as fast as he could so he could get to the station. Bunnie flew after him and Mace ran after the two as fast as he could run. Bunnie prayed with all her heart that they would reach the station in time. The gorilla had slowed them down considerably but with any luck, they would reach the station and save Sally before she could be used as bait for the station's guards. She could just imagine Sally being thrown before the guards and shot to pieces by Egg-Pawns or whatever robots Eggman had on guard. Hopefully it wouldn't come to that…

It seemed that Bunnie and Mace were already too late…

Abby the Squirrel and her gorilla tribe had arrived at the Death Egg refuelling station with Sally Acorn as their prisoner. Still trapped in the wooden cage with no way out, Sally could only sit there and wait as the gorillas put the cage down onto the ground and left her alone for the moment. The gorillas all gathered together behind a thick bush that provided the perfect cover for them. Abby held up a hand that signalled to the gorillas "wait here" and she peeked through the bushes. There it was, the Death Egg refuelling station that had been built in the Lost Jungle to provide yet another place for the Death Egg to stock and refuel should it be low on fuel. This station was truly a sight to behold. Given how it was built in the jungle, it had to be reasonably tall. The station was a huge rectangular shaped

building with a huge circular pad that the Death Egg would land on. There were pipes that would connect to the Death Egg once it landed and the pad itself would extend upwards and reach above the trees in order to receive the Death Egg. A great many trees had been felled in order to make room for the station. From up above, one would see a huge circle that had been carved in the middle of the sea of green that the jungle formed and in the middle of the circle, they would see another circle that had the Eggman Empire's familiar ugly, poisonous logo on it. The station had four gun turrets on high alert. There were no guards around at the moment. They had gone into the station itself to deliver a status report for Dr. Eggman. Abby knew this. She'd observed the station ever since its construction had been completed a couple of days ago and she knew the routine of the guards. The guards usually took their time when delivering a message to Eggman so they had plenty of time to prepare the plan.

"The guards are in the station. We can deliver the bait now." explained Abby "Once the guards come out, they'll be all over Sally!"

"You two, put Sally outside the bush." ordered Kay, pointing at the gorillas that had been carrying Sally's cage all the way to the station.

The two gorillas obeyed and they carried Sally out from behind the bush and they placed her down just a few inches away from the station's perimeter. The gun turrets didn't notice Sally for Sally hadn't been placed in their range of fire. But then again, they were programmed to attack something that looked like a threat. A girl in a cage would hardly catch their attention. Sally waited until the gorillas had gone back into hiding before he took Nicole off of her boot. She had a plan and she couldn't afford to wait. She had to do it now. Positioning herself right up to the bars, she sat down with her feet just between the bars and she held Nicole just between her thighs. She looked over her shoulder to see if anybody suspected what she was doing. Nobody said a word or raised a hand. Sally was in the clear. She deployed Nicole's hidden saw blade and she began to cut through the bottom of the bar that was directly in front of her. One bar would be enough to cut herself free. She was very slender so cutting through one bar would be more than enough to get free. Nobody seemed to notice what she was doing thanks to her

position. She just looked like she was sulking miserably against the bars of the cage, just as Sally wanted them to think. Smiling to herself, she slid Nicole back and forth until the saw blade cut through the bottom of the bar. The bar was still tough for it was thick wood but it now moved slightly because of the slice at the bottom. Sally stood up, making sure she was directly against the bars so the gorillas wouldn't see anything and she began to cut through another section of the bar, just a few inches down from the ceiling and under where her chin came up to. To the gorillas, she now looked like she was standing up and sulking against the bar. They didn't suspect a thing. It also helped how Nicole's saw blade didn't even make a noise and as it cut into the wood, it didn't make enough noise to attract attention. Sally cut through the bar and just as she suspected, the bar fell away with a clutter on the ground. Abby now finally realized what was wrong and watched with horror as Sally bent down, put Nicole back onto her boot and slipped out between the bars of the cage. Her plan was going belly-up already and the guards hadn't even come out yet.

"NO! She's free! Somebody stop her!" she squealed frantically.

Kay responded before any of the gorillas could so much as blink. He lumbered over to the cage just Sally picked up the sawn down bar. But Sally had heard him coming. She swung around and walloped the gorilla on his head with it. Kay was surprised at how hard Sally had hit him with just a thick wooden bar. The girl had surprising strength that was for sure. With Kay momentarily stunned, Sally ran back over to the bush and jumped over it. She landed straight on top of Abby and knocked her down onto the ground. She grabbed Abby's wrists and pinned her down.

"Sorry cousin but that's what you get when you try and sacrifice me to some Eggman robots." she said bluntly.

Abby growled savagely and she tried to get Sally off of herself but Sally held her down firmly. She couldn't move. Sally then proceeded to take back her wristbands and clip them back onto her own wrists. She clenched her fists and deployed her energy blades, making the gorillas back away in fear.

"Alright now, are you all willing to listen to me now?" asked Sally

smoothly "For I have a better plan for your little takeover."

Kay suddenly lumbered up behind Sally and he was about to knock her out again but Sally heard him coming. She held one of her blades against his throat and made him hesitate.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you." said Sally coldly "Now stand down and listen to me."

Reluctantly, Kay decided to do as he was told. He would much rather keep his head than lose it at this point in time. Satisfied but still keeping the blade against Kay's throat incase he tried anything, Sally got off of Abby and allowed her to stand up. She cleared her throat and spoke.

"Now then, your plan was a good plan but the sacrifice was completely unnecessary." explained Sally "You see, I am by far the best person to help you deal with Eggman robots. I've been fighting them for long enough, much longer than any of you have so you need me in order for this mission to be a success. Plus, I have just the tool to render the station defenceless. You think those gun turrets won't hesitate to shoot you once the guards come out? I have my arm blades. They'll be useful for gutting into the turrets and rendering them useless. Then once the turrets are done, you all can storm the station and take down the Eggman robots, me included. With my blades, I'll cut them all down to size before you can blink. With me, your mission is guaranteed to succeed so I only request that you let me live so that I may help you take over the station and take whatever pieces you require for your camp. After all, my mission is to destroy the station too. We should be working together in this mission, not against each other. What do you say?"

Abby took in what her supposed cousin had said. As much as she hated to admit it, Sally did have a point. A big logical point to the matter. Abby was not a person who always had to be right either. If she was wrong, she had no shame in admitting it. She considered it childish and not a very good image for somebody who rules over a tribe of gorillas. Abby thought on the matter and then spoke.

"You know what, you do have a point." she said slowly "And I must say, you sound an awful lot like me when I make up a plan. Heh,

maybe we are "related" after all..." she snickered, making a sarcastic gesture with her fingers at the word "related".

"Believe me, we are but that's not important." said Sally quickly "Do you know when the guards come out at all?"

"They usually spend roughly half an hour inside the station before they come out again." explained Kay "We've been quite observant of those robots and we know their routine all too well now."

"Routine, it can get you killed if you have the wrong person watching you..." mused Sally "Well that's certainly the case here. Before the Eggman robots come out, I'll take out the turrets. Then we can take down the guards. But you MUST wait before you take the station apart. You see, that station's meant to be a refuelling port for a giant ship Eggman is building and I'm hoping that the station will provide me clues as to where the ship is located. Once I've found out what I need, you're free to take what you wish."

"Sounds reasonable." said Kay agreeably "No way is our jungle being a port for some disgusting Eggman ship!"

"Utter desecration of the jungle this is! Violating its beauty just so it can be used for an Eggman ship! I'm even more glad we'll be taking that thing apart and putting it to better use!" barked Abby "Sally, you may make your move. No need to wait for us."

"Thanks." said Sally brightly "I knew you'd make the right choice cousin." she added with a wink.

Abby blinked as her brain suddenly went click. Sally had used that phrase very often and for some reason, it sounded familiar to her. Did she use to say it a lot to her? But that couldn't be, she was raised in the jungle and she lived with the gorillas! Or did she...? Abby began to wonder if Sally really was related to her after all. As Sally leapt out from her hiding place and ran over to the gun turrets, she turned to Kay.

"Kay, how did you find me?" she asked "Was I really raised in the jungle?"

Kay looked surprised as Abby asked him that. Four years had gone by and Abby had never questioned him on where she'd come from before. Kay decided to let Abby know everything. He sighed and he put his hands on Abby's shoulders as he spoke to her.

"It's time you learnt the truth Abby." he said softly "You see, you were raised in the jungle...but only for the past four years. You see, I was out collecting food for the tribe one year and then suddenly, I came across you. You was lying on your front with a large bump on your head. I saw a tree branch lying beside you and assumed you'd been knocked out by a tree branch."

"Wait a minute...I think I remember that!" cried Abby, snapping her fingers "Yes...yes...I was lost in the jungle and, and...I suddenly felt something hit me on the head and then...nothing. I blacked out after that!"

"Indeed." said Kay "I took pity on you and decided to take you back home to my tribe. We all looked after you while you were unconscious and when you woke up, you were wondering where you were and you started assuming that we were your family. You must have lost your memory Abby and taking pity, we decided to help you by giving you a new life. We had no idea what your past life was like so we thought it was easier if we had you start anew. We made you a member of the tribe and due to your rather amazing intelligence and hunting skills that you learnt from us, as well as a keen idea on how to build things such as our new camp...we made you our queen as you know. We really loved you Abby, so much in fact that we almost forgot you had amnesia. But now Sally has reminded me of this fact and it's time you knew the truth."

"So I've been living with you gorillas because I had amnesia?" gasped Abby "It all makes sense now. The knockout, me blacking out and then suddenly, I think you're my family...just one more thing. What was I wearing when you found me?"

"You wore an adventurer's outfit." explained Kay "You had a vest, shorts, boots and a hat on, all of which had the jungle camouflage patterns on."

"And Sally said that I was out adventuring with her mom and dad..."

mused Abby.

Abby could now see a clear image in her head. She was beginning to remember everything. In her head, she could see herself, four years ago in this very jungle, adventuring with King Max and Queen Alicia. She could even hear the voices once again and began to recite words that had been spoken that day in her head, even words such as "I wish Cousin Sally was here...". She even began to remember why Sally hadn't come to the jungle with her, Max and Alicia. That day, Sally had had a terrible flu and had been unable to come. Abby then began to remember betting lost...and then blacking out after something hit her on the head. It was true. Sally WAS her cousin and she'd just merely forgotten about her for four years. Abby straightened, her eyes wide with shock and her mouth drooping open. She remembered everything at last. Her memory that had been lost the day she'd been knocked out had been restored.

"Yes...I remember now!" gasped Abby "I...I was with Sally's parents on a safari trip! Their names were King Max and Queen Alicia! Sally didn't come that day because she had flu so we had to go without her! We were out in this jungle together and then I suddenly ended up getting lost after being chased away by hornets! And then I ended up getting knocked out by a tree branch falling on me and now here I am! Oh my gosh, Sally was right! I AM her cousin after all! And I was about to let some Eggman robots kill her! Oh god, what kind of cousin am I?!" she wailed. It seemed that getting her memory back had completely changed her attitude now. Gone was her wild and ruthless personality and she was now suddenly remorseful and fretting with guilt over what she'd done.

"You didn't remember Abby." said kay, warmly embracing Abby "And we didn't know you had any relatives, how were you to possibly know Sally was legitimately your cousin? I'm sure Sally will understand."

"I hope so." said Abby worriedly, hugging Kay back "After being out of her life for four years, I want to return to her..."

Her attention was snatched away by a cry of surprise that sounded like it came from Sally. Her head snapped around and she saw that to Sally's surprise, the station's guards had come out of the station

and were now staring at her with a nasty look in their optics. They were all Egg-Pawns and they were armed with glowing energy staffs that crackled with electricity at the ends. Sally had expected guns at the most but they were armed with staffs instead. Sally had her arm blades raised and she was ready to attack. But then something made her stop and stare in absolute fear. The Egg-Pawns had just the perfect opponent to combat with her. There was a robot that greatly resembled her among them and she stood before Sally with a cold look on her metallic face. Her eyes were an icy blue and seemed to stare rather ominously at Sally. The head greatly resembled Sally's head only it was completely spherical with red metallic hair that had four points sticking up from behind. There were silver discs on her cheeks and the eyes had metallic eyelashes protruding from the sides. The body looked different to Sally's though. It was a sleek, blue feminine body with shoulder pads, metal arms with clawed hands and slender metal legs with large metal feet. The robot also had energy blades that protruded from underneath its arms. Sally felt sick looking at this robot. She was livid with horror and anger. How dare Eggman make a metal her?! She'd put a stop to that though! Sally held her arms out in an X-shape and prepared to attack.

"He did it, he ACTUALLY did it! Dr. Eggman made a metal me!" snarled Sally "Well I'm not going to let that abomination live as long as I'm around! You're going down...Mecha Sally!"

She didn't know why she called it that but she just thought that "Mecha Sally" seemed oddly fitting for this robot. Mecha Sally raised her arms and she lunged at Sally at a speed much too fast for the eye to see. Sally was lucky her blades were still criss-crossed as Mecha Sally attacked. Mecha Sally lashed out with her blades and struck Sally's own blades. The impact knocked Sally clean off of her feet and sent her hurling into a bush. Sally was about to stand up but Mecha Sally rushed up towards her and swung her blades at Sally. Sally blocked Mecha Sally's attack but Mecha Sally so far had the advantage. She was on top of Sally and pushing down on her. Sally grunted with effort as she strained to force Mecha Sally off of herself. Mecha Sally was strong, very strong and Sally could feel her strength giving away as she pushed down on her. Abby could see that her cousin needed help and she needed it fast. Mecha Sally

was inches away from finishing Sally off.

"My cousin needs help! Gorillas, ATTACK!" barked Abby.

The gorillas screeched loud war cries and they thundered out from behind their hiding place and towards Mecha Sally and her Egg-Pawns. Mecha Sally saw the gorillas coming but she didn't move from her position. She instead let her Egg-Pawns deal with the gorillas. The Egg-Pawns weren't intimidated in the slightest by the gorillas though. They'd fought with them plenty of times already and kept coming out on top, this battle would be no different. Or so they thought. Abby completely ignored the Egg-Pawns and left Kay and the gorillas to fight with them. She looked over her shoulder as Kay grabbed an Egg-Pawn just as it lunged at him and missed and he ripped its head clean off of its shoulders. The Egg-Pawn's lifeless body collapsed down onto the ground and Kay snatched its staff away. Her gorillas were getting better at fighting the Egg-Pawns now. They knew how they fought and thus, were better prepared for them. The Egg-Pawns were surprised as the gorillas were suddenly either proving to be hard to hit or were getting the drop on them first. One Egg-Pawn managed to jab its staff into a gorilla's abdomen and give it an electrical shock but Kay sneaked up behind the Egg-Pawn and stabbed it in the back with the staff he'd stolen from the Egg-Pawn he'd killed. The staff penetrated the Egg-Pawn and electrocuted it to the point it blew a circuit and collapsed in a head on the ground. The gorilla it had attacked stole its staff and wielded it against the Egg-Pawns. The gun turrets which were meant to be defending the station from any intruders were not working luckily for the gorillas. Sally had taken them all out in the time Kay had been talking to Abby so the Egg-Pawns were on their own for this battle. Abby could see that the gorillas didn't need her help at the moment. It was good that they didn't for she was going to help Sally. The squirrel was beginning to lose her strength and Mecha Sally was about ready to deliver the killing blow. Abby sprang into the air and she kicked Mecha Sally in the head, knocking the robot down onto her side and allowing Sally to get back onto her feet.

"Pant…thanks for saving me Abby!" gasped Sally.

"Don't mention it." said Abby, grinning happily "I can't let my dear cousin get killed can I?"

"Dear cousin…you do remember after all!" Sally cried with joy "I knew you wouldn't forget me Abby!"

"Eh, I did actually but Kay gave me a memory boost." said Abby with a shrug "I'll explain later, we've got a metal you to deal with."

"Can you fight?" asked Sally worriedly.

"Sally, I've been raised by a tribe of gorillas for four years! Do you honestly think I didn't pick up some fighting skills in that time?" sneered Abby.

"In that case, we'll take her together." said Sally, unclipping her left wristband and tossing it over to Abby "We'll be more than enough for that thing if we both fight her at once."

Abby nodded agreeably as she clipped the wristband around her wrist and activated the energy blade with a close of her fist. Now Sally and Abby had an energy blade each and could fight Mecha Sally simultaneously. Mecha Sally picked herself up, her energy blades still blazing and she bent down in a battle-ready stance as she prepared to fight. Sally and Abby charged at Mecha Sally both together and they swung their blades at her. Mecha Sally blocked their attacks but now her arms were otherwise engaged, Sally and Abby both kicked Mecha Sally in the gut and made her double over. Mecha Sally straightened up, only to be kicked in the face by the two girls and thrown down onto her back. Mecha Sally wasn't down for long though, she managed to get back onto her feet and criss-cross her blades as Abby swung at her with a savage chop to the head. Mecha Sally's blades blocked the attack and she threw her arms aside, making Abby stagger backwards and nearly over balance. Sally swung with her energy blade and had to resist the urge to swing her other arm for she very nearly did so. She only had one blade now and she had to get used to it. Mecha Sally clashed blades with Sally and she kicked upwards, striking Sally in the face and throwing her head backwards. This caused her to overbalance and topple over. Abby switched off her blade so she could run up to Mecha Sally and uppercut her in the face. She ended up howling in pain as her hand began to throb. She maybe a strong puncher but she hadn't really practiced on metal so punching metal hurt her. Mecha Sally took advantage of this and she slashed Abby across

the chest. Abby screamed a blood curdling scream of pain as a long cut spread across her chest and began to sting as the air around them bit at it. Mecha Sally switched off her energy blades and slugged Abby in the gut, making the squirrel topple over onto her knees and cough hoarsely. Mecha Sally deployed her blades again and was about to finish off Abby but Sally sprang into the air and dropkicked Mecha Sally in the head, throwing her off-balance and causing her to topple over. She swung at Mecha Sally but only managed to tear a gash out of her metal hair as Mecha Sally dodged. Mecha Sally got up onto her feet and she deployed a laser cannon that was concealed in her hair. A piece of her metal hair simply slid away and the cannon extended up out of the open compartment. Sally yelped and threw herself aside as the deadly cannon blasted at her. The blast was fiery hot and it singed a nearby tree that was in Mecha Sally's path as Sally dodged her attack. The blast had singed the tree so badly that the tree began to topple over. Sally was well out of the way so the tree wouldn't land on top of her. Mecha Sally however was directly in the tree's path. She jumped up at the toppling tree and cut it in half. The top half of the tree landed with a noisy crash on the ground and Mecha Sally caught the other half while it was in mid air. She swung the tree around, hoping to hit Sally but Sally was still out of the way. Abby jumped up and sliced the tree down to size as Mecha Sally swung it. That just left Mecha Sally with a rather sizable log in her hands. Mecha Sally threw it into the air like a Scotsman caber tossing and the log nearly landed on Abby as she jumped out of the way. The log slammed atop of empty ground and fell over onto its side harmlessly for nothing else was in its way. Disappointed that the tree hadn't been all that helpful, Mecha Sally deployed her laser cannon again and aimed at Abby. Sally lunged at Mecha Sally and forced her to abandon her target and block her blade attack. Mecha Sally still had the cannon deployed so she aimed directly at Sally's face now she was up close and personal. Abby foiled that attempt though by plunging her blade directly into the cannon. Mecha Sally flinched as if to show Abby that that attack really did hurt and she lashed out at her with her blade. She very nearly cut Abby in two. A quick reaction had saved the squirrel and just caused Mecha Sally's blade to sweep past her belly. Abby ran forward and wrapped her arms around Mecha Sally, throwing herself forwards so she took Mecha Sally down onto the ground with her. Mecha Sally thumped Abby on the head with her

elbow. Abby's head started spinning from the impact and she became disorientated. Mecha Sally effortlessly threw Abby off of herself and got up onto her feet. Sally tried to help Abby but Mecha Sally grabbed her by the throat and hoisted her up off her feet. Sally squirmed and struggled in Mecha Sally's tough grip and Abby watched with horror as Mecha Sally prepared to kill her. Her blade was aimed at Sally's torso. One quick stab and it would be over. Abby forced herself onto her feet despite her crippling headache and she raised her arm.

Mecha Sally threw Sally onto the ground and she slashed at Abby. She caught her straight down the side and Abby screamed in agony as the hot blade cleaved through her skin. She had a terrible slash across her side just under her ribs and it hurt so much that Abby was no longer able to stand. She collapsed onto the ground, clutching her side in anguish, moaning loudly as the pain grew unbearable. Sally was horrified to see her cousin was hurt. She just hoped her wound wasn't fatal. Screaming angrily, Sally charged towards Mecha Sally and she slashed the robot across the chest. Mecha Sally took the blow and prepared for another attack. The attack never came. Mecha Sally was suddenly blasted squarely in the chest and thrown into the station by a powerful blast that seemed to come from nowhere. Sally looked up and saw that Bunnie Rabbot was here! She and Mace had finally managed to find the refuelling station at last and now they were here to even the odds. Mace had stampeded over to the Egg-Pawns and started ploughing through them as if they were nothing more than obstacles in his way. The gorillas screamed with excitement as Mace made their work a whole lot easier. Their battle had been evenly matched and now Mace had swung it completely in their favour. The gorilla that had distracted Bunnie and Mace ran behind Mace and helped him and his tribe to finish off the Egg-Pawns. Bunnie touched down beside Sally and hugger her delightedly.

"Sally-girl! Thank goodness ya'll are OK!" cried Bunnie "Me and Mace were told that a bunch of gorillas were gonna use you as bait to draw out the guards of this station! We thought you'd be dead before we got here!"

"No worries Bunnie, I managed to convince them to let me live." said

Sally softly "But your timing was perfect. You can help me stop Mecha Sally now."

"Seriously? Eggman made a metal you now?" snorted Bunnie "What's next? He'll make a metal me? That is, a fully metal me?"

"I hope not." said Sally grimly "Let's destroy that abomination once and for all shall we?"

"It'll be mah pleasure darlin'." said Bunnie with an excited grin on her face.

Mecha Sally stood up again and she ran over to Bunnie and Sally. Bunnie drew her arm back and she socked Mecha Sally directly in the face, throwing her off her feet and sending her hurling back into the refuelling station. Bunnie punched the air triumphantly. It never ceased to amaze her how hard she could punch, even with her metal arm. Sally knelt down beside Abby and she took her wristband off her wrist and clipped it back onto her own. She then turned to Bunnie.

"Please, look after Abby." she said "I'll finish off Mecha Sally."

"Sure thing hon." said Bunnie kindly "Do you know her or something?"

"She's my cousin." said Sally "And I don't want to lose the only family I have left. Don't let anything happen to her."

Bunnie was surprised to hear that this blonde-haired jungle girl she was looking at was related to Sally but she was not going to question the queen's orders. If she had to protect Abby then she had to protect her. Royal Fighters live to protect those in need after all. Bunnie deployed her shield generator and surrounded herself and Abby with a pink force field. Abby grunted as she rubbed her throbbing wound and she looked up at Sally.

"Be…careful…cousin…" she whispered weakly.

"I will Abby." said Sally kindly "I promise."

Now Sally had both blades again, she charged towards Mecha

Sally. Mecha Sally was just getting out of the rubble that had once been the refuelling station's wall before Sally slashed her across the face with her blades. Mecha Sally retaliated with an uppercut to the face and then a head butt to the chest that made Sally stagger but the queen regained herself. She soon ended up getting a helping hand for Mace suddenly ran in and walloped Mecha Sally into the air with his trunk mace. Mecha Sally spiralled down towards Sally and Sally slashed at her. She caught Mecha Sally on the leg and left a terrible cut down it. Had the blade gone in any deeper, it would have severed the leg completely. Mecha Sally jumped back onto her feet and she clashed blades with Sally. Sally swung at her but Mecha Sally blocked her attack. However, Sally straightened her arm out to the side and pushed Mecha Sally's arm away. This allowed her to stab Mecha Sally directly in the torso with her blade. Mecha Sally didn't seem hurt by the attack but that blow certainly seemed to weaken her. Sally then slashed Mecha Sally across the top of her head, tearing a chunk of her cranium off and exposing her head's innards. Sally wasn't' finished yet. She plunged her blades into Mecha Sally's back and tore chunks out of it. Then she punched Mecha Sally in the face and kicked her down onto the ground. Mecha Sally tried to attack again but Sally stood to one side and cut Mecha Sally's arm off with one quick slash of the blade. Mecha Sally's arm dropped off her body and landed with a clutter on the ground. Mecha Sally lashed out with her only remaining arm but Sally blocked it with her right arm and stabbed Mecha Sally in the chest with her left arm. Then to finish Mecha Sally off, Sally brought her blade straight up and sliced upwards through Mecha Sally's head. Mecha Sally's head split clean in two like an orange being chopped by a fruit knife. Sally decided to add further insult to injury by then slicing Mecha Sally in two between her torso and legs. Mecha Sally's dissected body collapsed onto the ground in a heap, sparking furiously and completely lifeless. Sally panted heavily. She'd done it at last. Mecha Sally was defeated. She was victorious.

"Take…that…Dr. Eggman!" she spat viciously.

"Yee-HAW! Ya'll showed that metal faker who's boss! Well done Sally-girl!" cheered Bunnie, punching the air triumphantly and practically going crazy with excitement.

"Thanks Bunnie…" said Sally softly "Now the day is won…we need to get Abby some medical attention."

She ran back over to Abby to see how she was. Bunnie switched off her force field so Sally could get to Abby. Sally knelt down beside Abby and looked at her wound. The gash in her side was bleeding but the gash didn't look too deep. Abby was definitely going to survive this one but she needed medial attention still.

"Are you OK Abby?" asked Sally worriedly.

"I'll…live…" grunted Abby "You…don't suppose…you could…get me…a doctor…at all Sally?"

"We'll take you home to New Mobotropolis." said Sally "We have medical facilities back at home that'll help you get back to good health again."

"New…Mobotropolis?" croaked Abby.

"Long story cousin, I'll explain later." said Sally "Before we get you home, we need to bandage that wound up to keep you stable until we get home."

"Take…me back…to camp." requested Abby "Kay…is good with… bandages."

"Very well." said Sally "Bunnie, help me carry her."

Bunnie helped Sally to pick up Abby and the two girls began to carry her away from the scene before them and back off to the gorilla's camp. Kay noticed them and he scampered over to see Abby. He was horrified to see that she was wounded and he took Abby from Sally and Bunnie.

"Abby!" he gasped "She's wounded! What happened to her?!"

"Mecha Sally slashed her." said Sally "We're taking her back to your camp so we can bandage up her wound. You can help us if you want."

"I'll carry my dear queen back to camp!" offered Kay "I've been

taking good care of her for four years, I'm not abandoning her in her time of need now!"

Sally was pleased to see such kindness being displayed by the powerful gorilla. Kay was definitely a gorilla who was powerful yet gentle at the same time. She admired that in a person. Kay cradled Abby tenderly in his arms as he carried her back to the camp with Sally and Bunnie following him. The other gorillas and Mace stayed behind to take apart the now unguarded refuelling station. Sally then suddenly remembered something. She wanted to see if the station would tell her where the Death Egg was. She ran back towards the station, leaving Kay and Bunnie to carry Abby back to the camp.

"Hey, what's up Sally?" asked Bunnie.

"There's something I need to do before the gorillas take the station apart!" Sally called over to Bunnie "Go on without me, I'll be back with you soon!"

Bunnie and Kay nodded and they continued to take Abby back to the camp. As for Sally, she ran inside the refuelling station just before the gorillas could take it apart. They stood back and waited for Sally to do what she needed to do. They remembered how Sally had wanted them to wait for her to do something first before they did what they wanted to do. The station had a door that opened up, allowing Sally to enter inside. The interior of the station reminded her very much of the Egg-Bunker. It had a lot of machinery pumping inside of it and there was a big computer monitor that loomed in the corner of the room. Sally ran over to the monitor and she plugged Nicole into it.

"Nicole, see if that computer tells us where the Death Egg is." ordered Sally "If this is a refuelling station, it must know where the Death Egg is."

Nicole agreed. There was no logic to having a station meant to refuel a ship and yet the station had no data records of the ship's location. It would need the Death Egg's location so it could send a signal to the ship and let it know that it was close by and the Death Egg could follow its path and land on it. Nicole quickly hacked into the station's computer and she found a very interesting piece of

information. She found a file that displayed the Death Egg's current location and it was saying that it was located underneath the Egg-Bunker. Sally almost laughed in amazement at this revelation. She almost felt embarrassed for not having worked it out already. It was so obvious! But then again, it was so obvious that it was overlooked.

"The Death Egg's under the Egg-Bunker?!" gasped Sally "You mean to tell me that the Death Egg was directly underneath our noses the whole time and it never occurred to us that it was there?!"

"Guess we thought Eggman wouldn't pick somewhere so obvious." said Nicole with a digital shrug on her screen "Guess we were wrong. Oh well, we know where the Death Egg is. We can destroy it before it takes flight and bring an end to Eggman's insidious plans."

"Indeed." said Sally happily.

She unplugged Nicole from the computer and she ran out of the station. Upon exiting, she said to the gorillas that were standing outside waiting for her "It's all yours now" and then sprinted off into the jungle. Satisfied, the gorillas began to tear apart the refuelling station with Mace providing a helping hand…

Much later that day, the gorillas had taken apart the refuelling station and had returned to their camp with a horde of metal plating, all four gun turrets and anything that they thought would make the camp look great. They were very excited with their haul and they couldn't wait to see how their camp would look with all the metal on it. But now was not the time to be celebrating. Abby was still hurt and as the gorillas returned to the camp with Mace following them, they saw that Kay was applying the last of the bandages around Abby's wound. The bandages themselves were made of wet leaves tied down over her wound with vines. It wasn't practical but it would do for now. Abby winced as the wet leaves stung her wound but she managed to bear it and she smiled weakly at Kay.

"Ugh…thank you." she whispered.

"Anytime Abby." said Kay "You've done so much for our tribe, this

was the least I could do for you."

"How do you feel now?" asked Sally worriedly.

"The pain's soothing a little…thank goodness." said Abby hoarsely "And my wound isn't…that serious. It'll heal."

"Thank goodness." said Sally "I just got you back Abby, I don't want to lose you again."

"And I…didn't want to be out…of your life again cousin." said Abby softly "I remember…I remember how close we were…we were like sisters rather than cousins. It's so sad…that our friendship came to an end…when I got lost here…and ended up living with the gorillas."

"My heart shattered when mom and dad came home and told me that you had been lost and they hadn't been able to find you." said Sally sadly "I thought you were dead, or at least very likely dead. I'm so thrilled that you're alive and now you can come back home to New Mobotropolis and catch up on lost times."

"Come back home…you mean you want to take Abby home?" asked Kay, sounding a little disappointed."

"Yes." said Sally "I'm sorry Kay but Abby doesn't belong here in the jungle. She belongs in New Mobotropolis. And also, she needs real medical attention. We can give her that back at home."

"But…but…she's our queen!" protested Kay "She's a great ruler for us all!"

"Kay, you only made me queen because…of how smart I was." said Abby softly "I may have been a good queen for you gorillas but its time for a change. You're all mighty gorillas, I'm only a puny squirrel. You need a gorilla ruling over you, not me."

"But who can take your place?!" cried Kay.

"You can." said Abby with a smile "I couldn't think of anybody who'd be more suited for the task than you Kay."

"Y-you really think so?" asked Kay in astonishment.

"I don't think, I KNOW so." said Abby with a wink "Kay, you are hereby promoted as King of the Gorilla Tribe."

"W-w-why…th-this is quite an honour Abby…" stammered Kay, tears coming to his eyes "Oh…th-thank you Abby. But…I really will miss you Abby."

Kay hugged Abby tenderly and let his tears trickle down his face.

"I'll miss you too Kay…" Abby whispered to him "But don't worry, I'm in the company of my darling cousin. She'll take good care of me. And I promise I'll come and visit you on occasion."

"That sounds wonderful Abby." said Kay "Goodbye my darling. And good luck back at home. Just know that you'll always be remembered by us."

"And I'll always remember you Kay." Abby said, kissing him softly on the cheek.

Kay let Abby go and he wiped away his tears. He waved goodbye as Sally and Bunnie picked Abby up and began to carry her away. Mace joined them. But before they left, Sally gave Kay one last look over her shoulder.

"Thank you so much for taking care of my cousin Kay." she said softly "I'll never forget your generosity."

"It was my pleasure Sally." said Kay happily "Goodbye Sally. It was nice meeting you and I know you'll take good care of your cousin. I'm just happy that you're reunited at last."

Sally smiled graciously back at Kay and then she and Bunnie began to carry Abby away. They had a hover-saucer that they would take back to New Mobotropolis. All they had to do was find it and set off for home. As they left the gorilla tribe behind, Abby began to feel excited. She could hardly wait to see what New Mobotropolis was like and hear what she had missed out on for four years. As for Sally, she was excited too. Excited about the fact she now knew where the Death Egg was located. The Death would never see the light of day once the Royal Fighters stormed the Egg-Bunker and

destroyed it completely. Eggman's plans were going to go up in smoke…hopefully for good this time…

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 185**

Aww...Sally's got her cousin back! How lovely! :D And now the Death Egg's location has been found! Will this sway the battle in the Royal Fighters's favour? Or is it still too late to stop it? Only time will tell...

Tune back into Heroes of Mobius where we see the conclusion to "For The Colony"...

As for Tales from Mobius, the spin-off title comes to an end as we see the "Formulation of the Dark Armada". The FINAL Tales from Mobius arc...

Formulation of the Dark Armada

Formulation of the Dark Armada

Takes place between Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius Stories 194-195

Roxy the Raccoon had lost track of how long she had been put in this cell after the terrible operation Finitevus had performed on her. She'd been put in the cell to "rest and recuperate" as the evil Dr. Finitevus had put it but Roxy began to wonder if Finitevus had actually done it just to pour salt on her already open wounds. Roxy had been looking forward to a much improved life after Sonic the Hedgehog had given her the perfect opportunity to betray Team Diamond at long last*. With Sonic's help, they'd faked her death to make Team Diamond think she was dead and thus, tempt them not to go looking for her. Roxy was finally free of their cruelty and ruthless ways and was set on one thing, improving her life and fixing the damages that had been done to it. But then Lennox Meers, Team Diamond's leader, had picked the unfortunate time to come to the Golden Caverns and discover her mining golden nuggets for herself. Thus Roxy had been exposed and now Team Diamond had wanted to kill her for her treachery. But things took a nose-dive for the worst when Dr. Finitevus kidnapped her and Team Diamond with aid of a warp ring and whilst Team Diamond were all too happy to work for Finitevus, Roxy had to be forced into working for him and Finitevus had done so by stitching a bomb insider her head. Sitting on top of her brain was a small bomb that would take her head off if Finitevus or any member of Team Diamond said "Bomb Self-Destruct". Roxy wasn't interested in losing her life yet so she had no choice but to play nicely and do as she was told. At the moment, she was in a dark, lonely cell with nothing to do but cry about what had happened to her and think about things. She'd stopped crying a while ago and was now just lying on her side, listening to her breathing. It just saddened her and broke her heart to think she was going to improve her life after wasting it with Team Diamond and this ended up happening to her instead. She could only pray that Sonic would come and rescue her eventually but that seemed very

unlikely. Roxy decided not to hope for she would drive herself crazy and just decided to see if an opportunity to get away from Finitevus would show itself. She jumped and sat up as the door suddenly opened and light from outside spilled into the room, chasing the shadows away. Roxy stared in terror as the dark figure of Dr. Finitevus stood before her, looking as menacing as possible.

"On your feet Roxy." ordered Finitevus.

"W-w-why?" stammered Roxy, her heart skipping a beat.

"Don't ask questions, just come." said Finitevus, a slight growl backing up his words.

"B-but I h-h-haven't d-done anything! P-please I…" babbled Roxy, still refusing to move.

"Relax Roxy, you're not in trouble." purred Finitevus, his tone much softer and friendlier sounding now "I think you've been a good girl so you deserve to be let out. Not to mention it's time."

"Time for what?" asked Roxy.

"Time to gather up the rest of my armada." said Finitevus sinisterly "I'd like for you to see who else will be joining you in my armada."

"Will they be friendly?" asked Roxy, feigning stupidity just to annoy Finitevus. She already knew the answer to that question.

"Depends on your definition of "friendly"." sneered Finitevus "Now come on, we haven't a moment to lose."

Roxy shrugged and got up onto her feet. She was losing her mind with boredom in this isolated cell so she may as well take Finitevus on his offer. She'd rather be free than spend another boring hour in this cell. Roxy left the cell behind and Finitevus shut it up. A prisoner always feels much better than the cell's door is shut and they're on the other side of the door. It makes them feel more free that way. Finitevus led Roxy through the corridors of the lab and headed to the main hangar bay. Roxy began to wonder what Finitevus would show her. As they walked, Finitevus looked over at Roxy.

"You know Roxy, if you continue to behave yourself, I won't have to put you back in the isolation chamber." he said smoothly "If you do anything wrong then you go back in the isolation chamber and you'll only be let out when I think you deserve to come out. Got it?"

"Yes Finitevus." sighed Roxy in annoyance "Why would I want to misbehave after you stitched a bomb inside my head?"

"Exactly." crowed Finitevus.

They turned down a corridor and came up to a flight of stairs that led down quite far underground. Finitevus had stated that this lab he was occupying had an underground hangar bay and he had kept his planned ship *The Nefarious* in there. He and Roxy walked down the stairs and came up to a solid metal door with the words "Hangar Bay 1" printed on them. Finitevus opened the doors with a touch of a button and he walked in, Roxy following closely behind. She gasped at what loomed before her in this massive hangar. There was an enormous ship standing proudly in the centre of the hangar and it instantly said to Roxy that it was a ship of malevolence, fear and terror for it had a dominantly black colour scheme with traces of red here and there, sharp spikes protruding from the sides and top of the fuselage and two red light that resembled evil looking eyes on either side of the bow. It looked like a more evil version of the Egg-Carrier, justified by the fact Finitevus had stolen an Egg-Carrier from Dr. Eggman and simply remoulded it into his own liking. In the week that Sonic, Sally, Silver and Blaze had been trapped on Solbius thanks to Raphael the Cyber Husky**, Finitevus and the current armada members had been hard at work on remaking this ship into something much more intimidating and a thousand times more powerful than the Egg-Carrier it had once been. This was *The Nefarious* . Despite maintaining much of the Egg-Carrier's original shape, it differed greatly from the Egg-Carrier for not only was it black in colour and had a more evil appearance, it also had stronger engines, stronger weaponry and a cloaking device which Finitevus had tested more times than he could count to see if it worked. Roxy was almost impressed at the sight of the ship but deep inside, she was sickened that this would be the Dark Armada's flying base from now on. Finitevus threw his arms to the side as if presenting something great.

"Behold, The Nefarious!" he declared happily "It is finally completed and ready for launch! Doesn't it look…magnificent Roxy?"

"It's…scary that's for sure." murmured Roxy, unsure if she should sound more enthusiastic or if her tone was acceptable enough for Finitevus "People will surely wet themselves at the sight of this thing…"

"The idea behind *The Nefarious* is that it is meant to evoke fear into the hearts of the Royal Fighters." explained Finitevus, clearly pleased with his handiwork "And believe me, there's more to be afraid of than just the ship's appearance. Its sophisticated weapons systems and cloaking device will make it a true terror to behold once it takes flight."

"I think just the appearance alone will give someone a heart-attack!" blurted Roxy "Never mind all those features you just mentioned!"

"Then maybe *The Nefarious* will do a bit more than that with its extra features." chuckled Finitevus.

"So, where's Lennox, Owen and Alistair?" asked Roxy "Are they onboard already?"

"They are though you won't be seeing them for a minute. They're… recovering from a beating I gave to all four of them for failing to get me the Master Emerald***." explained Finitevus.

The very thought of Lennox, Owen and Alistair beaten up and recovering from their beating made Roxy feel instantly happier but she did her best not to show it lest she give Finitevus the wrong idea.

"Oh um…that's unfortunate. I'm sorry to hear that." lied Roxy, looking sad despite the fact inside, she was jumping for joy over this fact.

"You'd better be since they're your team mates again and thus, you should show concern for them…" said Finitevus threateningly "Now then, let us get aboard and I'll introduce you to some more of my Dark Armada members since I didn't get to introduce you to

everybody yet."

"I can't wait to meet them." muttered Roxy sarcastically.

Finitevus ignored Roxy's blatant sarcasm and he used a warp ring to get himself and Roxy onboard *The Nefarious* just to save himself a bit of time. Finitevus liked to think that every second counted and it never hurt to spare a few. Roxy followed Finitevus through the warp ring and found herself inside a huge room that had a dull, purple glow all around due to a dull light in the ceiling. Roxy shivered, the purple glow set the perfect atmosphere for a ship of this nature. Evil looking on the outside, equally as evil looking on the inside was all she could think of to sum it up in a nutshell. She was going to have to force herself to get used to this unsettling atmosphere. She found herself staring at the other Dark Armada members that Finitevus had recruited. Scourge the Hedgehog, Sonic's evil brother and one of the few villains who could match him blow for blow stood to one side with his arms folded and his eyes narrowed into an impatient scowl. His beautiful, voluptuous girlfriend Fiona Fox was standing beside him with her arms folded and one foot pressed against the wall. Her tail was curled around Scourge's legs to which the hedgehog greatly approved of. Roxy gulped. She remembered Fiona. She had tried to join Team Diamond once and had ended up screwing up her first mission. She'd been left behind by her, Lennox, Owen and Alistair. Fiona would likely want to make her suffer while she was with the armada. Ravage Bloodfang, former pacifist and cannibalistic extremist, stood beside Scourge and Fiona with his cloak shrouding most of his body and making him look very sinister. Raphael the Cyber-Husky was with Ravage and looking as brutal as ever. And finally, Captain Metal was standing beside Raphael. He had just returned from his attempt to kill Blaze the Cat in Chun-Nan and had only just gotten his optic repaired after Li Moon had thrown a lance into it****. Finitevus had not been pleased at all to hear that Captain Metal had failed to kill Blaze and had come home blinded and minus a super warp ring but it didn't matter too much to Finitevus since he still had a super warp ring, most notably Silver's after he'd dropped it before Raphael threw him, Sonic, Sally and Blaze onto Solbius. The Dark Armada members glowered at Roxy as if her presence offended them in someway. Finitevus just held out an arm and introduced everybody.

"These will be your comrades aside from your Team Diamond associates." explained Finitevus "This is Scourge, this is Fiona, this is Ravage, this is Raphael and this is Captain Metal." he said, quickly sweeping over the members with his hand.

"N-N-Nice t-t-to m-meet you e-everybody." stammered Roxy, her voice wobblier than a tree in a hurricane storm.

"I can't say the same to you toe-rag." snarled Fiona, "I remember you Roxy…I begged you for help when Team Diamond betrayed me. And what did you say? "Get yourself out sunshine!" Well I DID! And now I'm here as a member of the Dark Armada and ready to take part in Finitevus's grand plan!"

Roxy frowned at Fiona. She remembered that time all too well. She'd hoped that Fiona didn't but she did and Fiona still seemed resentful to Roxy. She wondered if Fiona had enjoyed watching Finitevus beat up the boys of Team Diamond. That is, if she'd even watched him.

"Is she the fourth Team Diamond member you told us about?" asked Scourge, sneering at Roxy as if the raccoon had a filthy presence to her "Puh, she looks pathetic Finitevus! Why did you recruit her?!"

"Because I'm a person who believes in many hands making light work." explained Finitevus "Why have three members of Team Diamond…when I can have all four?"

"The other three members look legitimately threatening and like they're a liable part of the armada!" protested Fiona "That is, before you asked us to beat them all up as punishment for their failure. This heathen in the black bodysuit looks like somebody could just push her over and she'll cry like a baby!"

"Hey, I'm a lot stronger than I look for your information!" snapped Roxy "Do you think Finitevus would have recruited me if I was pathetic?"

"If anybody dares to begin an argument on this ship then so help me, you will ALL end up in the medical bay!" snarled Finitevus "Scourge, Fiona, you will treat Roxy with respect and nothing more

or else you'll be kicked out of the armada and given the promises I've made for you and the fact I have eight Chaos Emeralds to use, you wouldn't want to miss out on all that would you?"

Scourge and Fiona decided not to answer that question. They knew better than to get on Finitevus's wrong side, especially watching him beat up Team Diamond before he handed them over to the others for extra beatings. Now the tone had softened, Finitevus spoke.

" *The Nefarious* is finally ready for launch my glorious armada." he announced "We will go all around Mobius to recruit the last remaining members I wish to recruit and then we shall take down Dr. Eggman."

"If it were up to me, I'd just be satisfied with what I've got already and just go already." muttered Scourge "You're wasting time Finny! Forget about the other villains you want, just be satisfied with the armada as it is!"

"I am the founder of this armada Scourge so **I** decide when the armada's complete." snapped Finitevus "Object again and you'll never touch a single Chaos Emerald and get the opportunity to turn super. Understood?"

"Fine, fine, it's your armada, you decide how big it is!" sighed Scourge in frustration.

"Thank you." crooned Finitevus "Hold on tight everybody, the take off might be a little shaky."

The armada members held onto whatever they could possibly hold onto. Captain Metal had it the easiest for he just plunged his blade into the wall. Roxy decided to get down on all fours and see if that would be stable enough for her. Now the armada was prepared for launch, Finitevus clapped his hands twice.

"Nefarious, launch." he ordered.

Rather than use a pilot to fly the ship, Finitevus had decided to make *The Nefarious* computer controlled. In the cockpit of the ship you would find a computer screen that was feeding orders to the ship's

engines and whatever features it had and it was a super computer, meaning that it could operate extremely quickly and think faster than any Mobian on Mobius. The computer was given the same name as the ship to make giving orders easier and Finitevus programmed the Nefarious computer to ONLY respond to his orders and nobody else's. The ship would fly only when Finitevus told it to, making taking control of the ship an impossibility. If somebody got onboard and tried to fly the ship, the computer would actually be the one doing the flying. The cockpit had controls in case the computer broke down and *The Nefarious* had to be controlled manually but only a member of the Dark Armada would be able to fly the ship. The controls were fingerprint sensitive so if anybody pressed a button or touched a joystick, the controls would scan the user's fingers. If it was a unauthorized person touching the controls, they would lock and refuse to move. As long as the computer was online though, the controls wouldn't work because they didn't need to. Finitevus had literally built a ship that couldn't possibly be hijacked in anyway. The Nefarious computer registered Finitevus's voice command and it acted upon the order immediately. The hangar bay doors up in the ceiling began to open and *The Nefarious* started up its engines. An ominous rumble could be felt all around the ship as it was preparing to take off. The doors fully opened and *The Nefarious* began to ascend up into the sky. It took off slowly, the ground shuddering as its great engines pushed it up into the sky. As it ascended, Finitevus ordered the computer to activate the cloaking device. He'd much rather Dr. Eggman didn't see it take off since *The Nefarious* was in Megapolis and not too far from the Egg-Bunker. *The Nefarious* disappeared from view, its huge shape vanishing and its and evil colours matching the surroundings to properly turn it invisible. Even the engine's fumes were invisible. To anybody watching this take off, it would look like the hangar bay had opened up but nothing was coming out of it, the only indication of anything around being the loud noise of the rockets. The invisible ship left the hangar bay behind and it took off into the sky with a roar of its engines. *The Nefarious* was slow on take-off but its acceleration was incredible. It could get up from the ground and up into the sky in a matter of seconds. *The Nefarious* climbed up into the sky until it passed through a sea of clouds that hung above Megapolis. It looked like the weather was going to turn grey, perhaps a fitting atmosphere for *The Nefarious* and its crew. The moment *The*

Nefarious passed through the clouds, Dr. Finitevus ordered the cloaking device to turn off. *The Nefarious* was now visible but from below, nobody would see it for it was shrouded in a vast ocean of clouds. The perfect hiding place for a ship this size. Finitevus would activate the cloaking device again once the clouds had gone. Now the ship was stationary, Finitevus commanded *The Nefarious* to hover and then he spoke to his armada members.

"A very successful take-off if I do say so myself." purred Finitevus "Nobody spotted us and we're perfectly hidden behind a bunch of clouds. What do you think?"

"I say to heck with me old ship tharr Metal Marauder, THIS be a proper ship for a pirate such as me self Dr. Finitevus!" cried Captain Metal happily "Imagine how much plundering I could do with a ship like this!"

"It's better than that dingy old lab we had to hide out in." said Fiona, clearly pleased to be somewhere other than the lab at last "THIS is a real base for the Dark Armada! It feels awesome being up here in the sky and casting our shadow down below!"

"You and me both Fiona." said Scourge with a wink "I bet Sonic will be scared stiff of us when he sees this baby flying over Mobius! And how great it'll feel to be looking down on him like the worm he is!"

"The take-off was smoother than I thought it was going to be." said Ravage brightly "I think this is a base that'll be of great comfort and luxury for us."

"I'm glad it's finally done." said Raphael "Now I'll wait to see this badass ship in action! So Finitevus, what are we doing now? The ship's in the sky, yippee, now what?"

"We recruit the last few members I need for my Dark Armada." explained Finitevus "And I have a plan for that."

"Number one rule of Finitevus metal-head." Scourge whispered to Captain Metal "He ALWAYS has a plan."

"That be impressive indeed matey." Captain Metal whispered back.

"While I appreciate the compliments, we are tight for time at this moment so please may I deliver the plan?" asked Finitevus coldly.

Scourge and Captain Metal nodded.

"Thank you. Now the plan is I'll use my warp rings to warp us to the locations of Lord Sycorax and his two henchmen Vladek and Romeo, Zira the Ruthless, Conquering Storm and the Raiju Clan and Cutthroat Jim." explained Finitevus "I know where they all are so I can warp you all there easily. Scourge and Fiona, you two will get Zira and the Raiju Clan." he ordered, pointing at the villainous couple "Captain Metal, you will get Cutthroat Jim." he pointed at Captain Metal "And Raphael, you will get Sycorax, Vladek and Romeo." he finished, pointing at Raphael.

"You got it Finny." said Scourge approvingly "Me and Fiona will have no trouble freeing Zira and the Raiju Clan from that Long De Don-whatever prison that's holding them!"

"Lóng de dòngxué." Finitevus corrected "I shall warp you to the prison immediately. And to make your jobs easier, I will trust you with this..."

He threw them a Chaos Emerald and Scourge caught it. He had given them the purple Chaos Emerald. Fitting considering the colour of Scourge's super form. Scourge beamed with delight.

"You rock Finitevus!" he cried excitedly "Thank you! We'll just freeze everybody with a Chaos Control and stop them dead in their tracks so they can't stop us from breaking the prisoners out!"

"That's the idea." said Finitevus, flicking a warp ring into the air and opening up a portal to the Lóng de dòngxué Prison "Good luck you two."

"Trust us Finitevus, we'll be back before you can say "Chinese Chow-Mien"." said Fiona, flipping her hair aside confidently.

Roxy just frowned at Fiona. She already knew who her least favourite member of the Dark Armada was and yet Fiona wasn't this bad when she'd first met her. Fiona just came across as annoyingly

arrogant and vain, something she didn't like in the slightest. She would make sure she and Fiona had as little interactions as possible during her time here, especially since Fiona would likely want nothing more than to give her a black eye. Scourge and Fiona ran through the warp ring and found themselves transported instantly over to Chun-Nan directly in front of the Lóng de dòngxué Prison. Finitevus took the warp ring back since they didn't need it. They would just Chaos Control back onto *The Nefarious* with the Chaos Emerald he'd given them. Finitevus flicked open the warp ring again, this time opening up a portal to Cocoa Island.

"Cutthroat Jim is stranded on Cocoa Island and this warp ring will take you right there." he said to Captain Metal "Do NOT come back empty handed."

"I swear on tharr oil of me old ship-mates that I will come back with Cutthroat Jim!" declared Captain Metal "It'll be the most I can do afterrrr failing to kill Blaze tharr Cat again..."

Finitevus agreed with Captain Metal. He'd been disappointed to hear that Captain Metal had failed his mission so he hoped that he wouldn't fail this one, otherwise he would have to dispose of a promising armada member. Captain Metal ran through the warp ring and found himself leaping out of *The Nefarious* and onto Cocoa Island. Finitevus let him keep the warp ring for he didn't have another way back to the ship. Finitevus summoned one last warp ring and opened up a portal to the New Mobotropolis Detention Centre. Thanks to pictures on the internet, he knew what the building looked like so he wouldn't be getting his coordinates wrong.

"Lord Sycorax, Vladek and Romeo are in the building that the warp ring is taking you to Raphael." said Finitevus "Break in and get the reptiles out. Kill anyone if you have to."

"With pleasure!" said Raphael gruffly "They won't know what hit em!"

Raphael eagerly charged through the warp ring and vanished through the portal. Finitevus took the warp ring back since Raphael had a way back already, his portal technology. Now Raphael had gone. Finitevus stood by and waited for his minions to return. It made Roxy shudder at how quiet it suddenly was now she was

alone with Finitevus and Ravage. The silence was unsettling. *The Nefarious* was a pretty quiet ship when it wasn't moving, just hovering. In order to break the eerie silence, Roxy decided to speak.

"So um...wh-what do you want me t-to do th-then?" she asked.

"We wait." said Finitevus bluntly "Wait for everybody to return."

"You sure you don't want me to do anything?" asked Roxy "Maybe get Lennox, Owen and Alistair up here so they can see the new members?"

"That would be nice actually." said Finitevus "You may bring them up here. Just be patient, they'll be a bit slow given they're still recovering from their callous beatings. Ravage will show you the way to the medical bay."

Roxy gulped as Ravage scowled at her. He clearly wasn't too pleased at the fact he had to take her to the medical bay but he didn't dare question Finitevus's orders. Ravage took Roxy down the corridor and the two disappeared through a door as he led the raccoon down to the medical bay. Finitevus waited for them to return. He was alone with nothing but his thoughts, a great solace for himself when preparing for something as grand as his big scheme.

"Just you wait Mobius...my armada is coming...and Operation: Enerjak Reborn is about to begin..." he purred sinisterly to himself "I will be the most powerful being in the world and you will not be able to stop me..."

The Lóng de dòngxué Prison had seen no real activity ever since the downfall of the Raiju Clan***** a few months ago. The prison had been pretty quiet after Conquering Storm and her clan had been delivered to the prison much to the guard's delight. Conquering Storm had done the one thing that Zira the Ruthless had been striving to do since the day she turned evil...conquer Chun-Nan. Her reign had been short-lived though for the Royal Fighters had come to the country and helped Matilda's mentor Master Kai Zen to bring

the clan down. Conquering Storm had been beaten in a fight by Master Kai and now she and her clan had been locked away in the Lóng de dòngxué Prison for the rest of their lives. It was the most they deserved for their crimes. The Raiju Clan had all been kept in one room whereas Conquering Storm was in an isolated cell since the guards though isolating her from the clan would make her feel lonely and separated, dragging her spirits down and leading her to accept her fate. Without Conquering Storm, the clan would find it hard to function and lose motivation without her and over time, they'd come to accept their place in the prison. Conquering Storm hadn't faltered in the slightest much to the annoyance of the guards. She was still desiring revenge even though it was impossible for her to escape. Like Zira the Ruthless, her limbs had been infused in concrete to hold her in place so she couldn't move. That didn't stop her from trying to break free though. Zira on the other hand had legitimately given up all hope of ever being free again. She'd been here much longer than Conquering Storm and thus, had come to grips with reality whereas Conquering Storm had not. It pleased the guards that Zira had lost all hope so it gave them hope that Conquering Storm herself would break just like Zira had done. Something would be breaking though...and it wasn't Conquering Storm's spirit. The guards gathered around the prison and stared as a huge golden circle appeared from nowhere and out of it stepped a green hedgehog and a red vixen. The guards were gobsmacked, they'd never see these two before and they'd clearly done something close to magic. Were they masters of ancient Chi-Magic or something? The guards raised their weapons and prepared to attack the two strangers. Scourge and Fiona stood before them, looking utterly confident and like they had everything under control. That bit of body language made the guards nervous. If they had failed to intimidate somebody then that meant they were up against a tough opponent. Scourge sneered at the guards. He could take them all out in one spin-dash but he knew that he had a better method to use than just "stomp on the opponent until its flattened". Scourge held the Chaos Emerald up high, the gem catching the guard's attention, and he activated a Chaos Control that made all the guards freeze on the spot. The guards were still and silent as if they were characters in a movie that had been paused. The Chaos Control would last a while. By the time it was over, Scourge and Fiona would have left with their targets in tow. Scourge and Fiona

ran into the prison and started searching through all of the cells in order to find Zira, Conquering Storm and the Raiju Clan. Finitevus had shown them pictures of the Chun-Nan villains so they knew who they were looking for. Due to his super speed, Scourge found Conquering Storm in seconds and he knew who she was just by looking at her. A lynx in a coolie hat and a purple samurai outfit was very hard to miss or even forget so Scourge knew he'd found his target.

"There's Connie…now to get her free." Scourge said to himself.

He spin-dashed Conquering Storm's cell door down and ran inside. Conquering Storm was startled at the sudden entry and she stared at Scourge incredulously.

"Sonic? But…you're green now. What…?" she stammered.

"The name's Scourge Connie and I'm here to bust ya out!" announced Scourge "We kinda work for a crazy scientist guy who has use for your skills. You and your clan are free now and we're going to grant any wishes you have."

"As nice of you as that is, Scourge, I must ask why your master wants me and my clan?" asked Conquering Storm.

"He'll explain everything to ya baby, now stand still while I break your binds." ordered Scourge.

"Be careful, I'd much rather not lose my limbs if you please." said Conquering Storm sternly.

Scourge nodded and he prepared to do a spin-dash. Conquering Storm braced herself as he hurled himself at the concrete pillars holding her limbs into place. Scourge smashed them to pieces instantly, freeing Conquering Storm. Conquering Storm flipped into the air and landed gracefully onto the floor. It was almost like she'd never been restrained. Ninjas like her have amazing endurance and stability. Even years of inaction wouldn't slow them down that much. Conquering Storm flexed her arms and legs, pleased to be able to move again.

"Yes…I'm free, free at last!" she cried happily, thrusting her arms up delightedly. After being immobile for so long, it felt good to be free and be able to move again. She turned to Scourge and bowed in gratitude.

"I owe you a debt of honour Scourge." she said "Me and my clan will join your master and serve his every wish as a token of thanks for getting me out of this wretched prison."

"I'm sure the doc will appreciate that Connie." said Scourge with a dashing smile on his face.

"I am Conquering Storm, nothing less." said Conquering Storm coldly "NEVER call me Connie!"

"Sorry, let's get your clan out while we're at it." said Scourge quickly "My girl Fiona should have…"

"Scourge, I've found the Raiju Ninjas!" Fiona called to Scourge from outside Conquering Storm's cell "Follow me, I'll take you to them!"

"Good." said Conquering Storm bluntly "My clan deserves to get revenge for our imprisonment too. Wonder if your master will help us in that regard?"

"You can drop him a suggestion Conquering Storm." said Scourge, winking at the coolie-hat wearing lynx.

Scourge and Conquering Storm ran out of the cell and followed Fiona to the cell that contained the Raiju Ninjas. In her mind, Conquering Storm was beginning to think of ways she could get revenge on Chun-Nan and take it over once and for all. She could probably use Scourge and Fiona's mysterious "master" as a means to an end and once she'd gotten what she wanted, she would drop all ties with him and rule Chun-Nan by herself. And once she gained control of the country once again, she wouldn't lose it. Fiona came to a stop just outside and iron cell door that had a small barred window for looking in and out of. The entire Raiju Clan was kept in there from the second-in-command Dàfēng Rai to all the other ninjas. It angered Conquering Storm to see her entire clan being locked in one room together like a herd of sheep fenced together in

a pen. Well they would soon be free like she was. Scourge spin-dashed the door down as if it was made of wood and not iron. The Raiju Clan all stared in amazement at the door breaking down but their amazement turned to joy when they saw that their leader, Bride of the Conquering Storm, was free and was striding into the room to see them.

"Mistress! You're free!" cried Rai happily "However did you escape your bonds?"

"I had some help." said Conquering Storm, motioning over to Scourge and Fiona "These two have freed us and wish to recruit us in return. As a token of thanks, I have decided to join their master and serve whatever purpose he wishes for us."

"You sure that's a good idea?" asked Rai unsurely.

"You'll not regret it tough guy, that I can promise ya." said Scourge reassuringly "Our master is making an army of villains with one goal in mind, to make us all rulers of Mobius. He could help you guys conquer Chun-Nan if you want him to."

"That alone is enough reason for me to join this army." said Rai "We will join you green hedgehog and we will serve you faithfully."

"Very good." said Scourge happily "Now then, we'll just get you onboard our master's ship…"

He pulled out the purple Chaos Emerald again and used a Chaos Control to teleport the entire Raiju Clan up onto *The Nefarious* . The clan vanished in a purple glow out of the cell that made them look like they were performing some kind of magic trick. In every possible sense of the word, the Chaos Emeralds could well be considered magical. The moment the Raiju Clan disappeared, Scourge and Fiona ran off down the corridor to find Zira's cell. It didn't take them very long though considering Scourge's amazing speed. They came across Zira's cell in a matter of seconds and Scourge once again, broke the door down. Fiona stayed outside and kept watch, wondering if the Chaos Control that was freezing the guards had worn off yet or if it was still keeping them frozen. She would warn Scourge the moment any guards came out at all. They'd just use a

Chaos Control to freeze them again. In the cell, Scourge broke Zira free of her bonds and the moment she was free, Zira's old personality and fiery streak instantly returned to her. She'd lost hope of ever being free again and yet she was now free and ready for revenge. Zira flexed her muscles and stretched her limbs, relieved to be able to move again.

"At long last…I'm free!" Zira purred with excitement "Now Chun-Nan will bow to me at last! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

She turned to Scourge and bowed down to him, the hedgehog enjoying this since the very image of a woman bowing down to him made him feel grand inside.

"You have freed me Sonic-look-alike. I thank you very much for your kindness." said Zira "But why did you free me?"

"I work for a man named Dr. Finitevus and he wants to help you conquer Chun-Nan kung-fu leopard girl." explained Scourge "He asked me to free you so he can do just that."

"You work for somebody who wants to help me?" asked Zira "While I would much rather take over the country myself…I know that alone I have no chance. Maybe working with your "Dr. Finitevus", I might have a chance. You promise me he'll get me what I want?"

"You have my word as an honourable villain and enemy of Sonic the Hedgehog." said Scourge with his hand over his heart "The name's Scourge by the way."

"I'm Zira the Ruthless and I must say, it's an honour to meet an enemy of Sonic the Hedgehog." said Zira with a wicked smile on her face.

"Dr. Finitevus is formulating an army of villains Zira, we're all enemies of Sonic the Hedgehog." said Fiona darkly "You'll love it in the army, believe me."

"Then can you take me to Finitevus and this army of his?" asked Zira "I want to thank him personally for sending you two to free me."

Scourge whipped out the Chaos Emerald again used a Chaos

Control to warp himself, Fiona and Zira out of the cell and back up onto *The Nefarious* . The moment they left, the Chaos Control that had frozen the guards wore off and the guards were left to just pick up the pieces of the destroyed cells and to deal with the horror that had befallen Chun-Nan. Zira and Conquering Storm were free… Chun-Nan was in for a dark hour now its two greatest villains had been freed from imprisonment…

Cutthroat Jim, once a proud pirate captain, had been reduced to nothing more than a miserable wreck of a pirate who could barely keep hold of his sanity anymore.

He had been marooned on Cocoa Island after a run-in with Sonic the Hedgehog, his Royal Fighter friends and Marik the Martian during the great Chaos Emerald hunt****** and had been stuck here for an entire year. His sanity had depleted sharply and as life went by on the island, his resources had diminished. He was so desperate for survival that he had even slaughtered his entire crew and eaten them, even his First Mate Gormless. But now he'd eaten his entire crew and was just left chewing on their bones until he could find some more food. He looked terrible too. His clothes were in rags and his fur was ruffled to the point that he didn't look that recognizable anymore. He was sitting on the beach of Cocoa Island, rocking back and forth and muttering inanely to himself whilst chewing on a thigh bone that had once belongs to First Mate Gormless.

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest…yo, ho, ho and a bottle of rum…" he mumbled "I be dead soon, I be one of the fifteen men on a dead man's chest…and I be having no bottle of rum left! Polly want a cracker, pieces of eight! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha…I have no cracker and I have no pieces of eight! Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Any pirate watching this pathetic bout of insanity from Cutthroat Jim would find it hard to believe he was once a pirate captain with his own crew. All they would see was a lunatic who is the embodiment of pathetic and weak. But Cutthroat Jim wouldn't be stuck on this island any longer. Much to his surprise, a golden portal opened up from nowhere and out of it stepped a metallic looking creature that resembled a pirate of some kind with his right arm resembling a pirate pistol with a cutlass blade attached underneath it. Cutthroat

Jim shrieked in terror and backed away from the robot.

"EEEEEKKKKKKKKK! Get away from me ya crazy creature!" he shrieked "I'm not ready to join me crew in Davy Jones's locker yet! Please spare me!"

"Calm yer jumpy nerves Jim lad, I am not here to kill ye, I am here to rescue ye." said Captain Metal, scowling at Cutthroat Jim with his single red optic. He began to wonder if recruiting Jim was a good idea since he looked like a wreck of a pirate and would likely not be very useful to the Dark Armada.

"Yer...here to rescue me?" asked Cutthroat Jim in astonishment "Oh praise tharr pirate ancestors! It be a miracle! I be saved at last!"

"Yes, ye be saved at last. Wonderful." muttered Captain Metal "Being stranded on this here island has done a number on ye hasn't it?"

"You know how desperate I was ta survive matey?!" yelled Cutthroat Jim, throwing his arms around in an exasperated manner "I had to EAT me own crew just ta stay alive! That's how badly this accursed island has affected me!"

"Ye ate yer own crew just ta survive out here?" murmured Captain Metal, clearly fascinated to hear this for some reason "That reminds me of how desperate I be to keep myself alive...I think me and you will be fine ship mates indeed. Come with me Jimmy and I will make yer life much better."

"Yes, yes, anything, ANYTHING to get me off this wretched island!" exclaimed Cutthroat Jim in a comically exaggerated manner of actions and gestures "Give me somewhere new to be in! PLEASE!"

"OK, OK, calm down." sighed Captain Metal "We have go to do something about your mentality problems..."

Hopefully getting Cutthroat Jim off of Cocoa Island would bring his sanity back. Captain Metal reopened the warp ring and he took Cutthroat Jim with him through the warp ring and back onto *The Nefarious* . Cutthroat Jim would certainly be amazed at what kind of

ship he was going to be on now and he'd be flying in the air rather than sailing in the seas...

The New Mobotropolis Detention Centre was having little to no trouble in keeping control of its prisoners. That wasn't saying much though considering that the prison didn't really have many prisoners and the only important prisoner they had was Lord Sycorax and his two minions Vladek the Frill-Necked Lizard and Romeo the Chameleon. Lord Sycorax had once been a leader of a group of anarchistic reptiles known as "The Region of Rebellious Reptiles" and Vladek and Romeo were his two right hand men. Now they had been reduced to just the three of them after a time rift had swallowed up his entire region******* and even after finding the five legendary dragons of Chun-Nan, he had been defeated and had been locked up in the New Mobotropolis Detention Centre for life to pay for his appalling crimes********. The mighty truly had fallen in Lord Sycorax's case. His beautiful army had been reduced to three and he was spending his time locked up yet again, this time for good. He was in a prison in the home city of Sonic the Hedgehog himself. He had no chance of escaping. Try escaping, Sonic will just come and stop him plain and simple. He had been furious when Scourge and Fiona ended up getting sucked up by a time rift and hadn't been found since. He could just imagine Scourge and Fiona walking around freely while he was still stuck in here plotting his revenge. Over time though, he'd ended up losing some of his enthusiasm and began wondering if it was even worth plotting to escape anymore since it seemed so impossible. It didn't help that Romeo and Vladek had already lost any hope of freedom again so without their enthusiasm, he was finding it hard to keep his own. Hard to believe considering Lord Sycorax was so charismatically vain and often found it very hard to lose hope of anything. But prison can effect somebody in more ways than one. You never know what containment will do to you.

Outside the prison, two bulldog guards were on duty with laser rifles in their hands and they were keeping an eye out for anything that dared to come near the prison with intentions of the evil kind. They'd been pleased at the fact nobody seemed to be interested in

breaking in. A long period of time had passed and they'd had nothing to deal with so they had the feeling that today would be the same. And it was...until now. A golden portal opened up directly in front of the centre and out of it jumped a muscular yellow husky with cybernetic implants in and around his body. The guards raised their rifles and pointed them directly at the stranger. Raphael didn't look the least bit intimidated by them.

"Stay where you are, this is a restricted area!" barked the first guard.

"Trespassing will not be tolerated!" barked the second guard "If you do not leave here now, we will be forced to take action!"

"Sorry to hear that morons but I'm here for a reason and you squares aren't getting in my way." growled Raphael.

He drew out his hand blades and he plunged them into the guard's chests, killing both of them instantly. Raphael threw the guards aside and used his sonic wave emitter to break down the gate. With the gate down, he ran into the building itself and broke inside with no effort whatsoever. He was stunned at how easy it was to break into this centre. They were seriously holding an anarchistic nut job in a place this unsecure?! Raphael wasn't sure if he could take the Royal Fighters seriously if this was the best they could do in making a prison to hold somebody. Raphael found himself down in the cell block sooner than he could have expected and he ran over to Lord Sycorax's cell. The crocodile looked up and stared at Raphael in astonishment. Vladek and Romeo, who were in the cell with Sycorax, stared at Raphael but they were more excited than astonished since it meant they were getting out at last.

"Hey, who the heck are you?" he asked "And what brings you to the lowly place of Lord Sycorax?"

"What do you think genius? I'm breaking you out you moron!" snapped Raphael "A guy named Dr. Finitevus would like to meet you and he's hired me to bring you to him."

"Who's Dr. Finitevus?" asked Sycorax "And why should I be interested in casting my lot with him?"

"You wanna stay in here? I don't think so, so shut up for a minute while I get you outta here!" growled Raphael fiercely.

Sycorax did what he was told and he sat still as Raphael broke his cell door down with his sonic wave emitter. The glass shattered under the pounding of the waves and collapsed down into glistening shards at Raphael's feet. Sycorax already disliked Raphael and that was mostly because of how rude and overbearing he was being towards him. Raphael better respect him once they're out of this prison or things were going to be very difficult between them. Now the cell was open, Raphael activated a portal and stepped to the side.

"Just step through this portal, it'll take you to Finitevus." ordered Raphael.

"This Finitevus person better have a good reason for wanting the glorious Lord Sycorax in his presence." said Sycorax, preening like he always did.

Raphael didn't think he'd get on that well with Sycorax. His narcissism was beginning to irk him already and they'd only just met. Raphael ran through the portal and Sycorax followed with Vladek and Romeon following cautiously behind. The New Mobotropolis Detention Centre had lost Scourge and Fiona, now it had lost Lord Sycorax. Sonic wouldn't be too pleased to hear this at all. Vector the Crocodile, Lord Sycorax's son and former Region of Rebellious Reptiles member, would be even less pleased to hear that his dad was free yet again...

Up on *The Nefarious* , Dr. Finitevus was standing by and patiently waiting for Scourge, Fiona, Captain Metal and Raphael to return with the last few recruits he wanted for his armada. Roxy and Ravage stood on either side of him and so were Team Diamond. Lennox, Owen and Alistair had been brought out of the medical bay and up to this room of the ship so they could see the new recruits. They all looked terrible. After failing to get the Master Emerald, Finitevus had seen to beating them up for punishment. His advanced fighting prowess was too much for the three to keep up so they were beaten

down in mere minutes and Finitevus had asked the rest of the armada to beat them up just to pour salt on the wound. They were horrifically bruised, full of cuts and they were aching all over. It had been a job bringing the three up to the main room of *The Nefarious* but Roxy and Ravage had managed it at last. Now they were waiting along with Finitevus, Roxy and Ravage for the other armada members to return. Much to Finitevus's surprise, they weren't even waiting for very long. Captain Metal had returned to the ship almost immediately and he had Cutthroat Jim in tow to boot. Finitevus had expected Captain Metal to be back first since all he had to do was go to an island and get Cutthroat Jim back here, nothing too hard. Jim had already taken to looking around the ship, clearly pleased to be somewhere new for a change. He wasn't sure what to think about *The Nefarious* though. All he cared about was the fact he was finally off Cocoa Island. Raphael had been the second to return and he had all three reptiles with him. Finitevus guessed Raphael didn't have too much trouble. Upon arrival, Sycorax, Vladek and Romeo had started observing their surroundings and gaping in amazement.

"Wow...are we on a ship?" asked Romeo "It feels a bit like our old region flagship only more sinister looking..."

"We are on a ship Romeo, look out that window!" exclaimed Vladek "We're up in the sky!"

"That Finitevus fellow certainly has style..." mused Sycroax "I like that. I think I'm going to like him already."

Finitevus was well pleased to hear this. Before he could announce himself though, a huge purple flash lit up the room and the Raiju Clan appeared directly before Finitevus. Moments later, Zira the Ruthless along with Scourge and Fiona appeared in a purple flash. Finitevus grinned happily. His armada had completed their mission. The last few members he wanted for his army were here at last. Unfortunately, Conquering Storm and Zira saw each other and immediately started staring daggers at each other. The two women had a fierce rivalry with each other. Once Conquering Storm had come to Chun-Nan to help defeat Zira when she attacked the second time*********. The second time, Conquering Storm had teamed up with Matilda to stop Zira escaping from prison. Now they were in the same room together and they were ready for a fight.

"You...what are you doing here?!" snarled Conquering Storm.

"I could ask you the same you iron-toed wretch!" growled Zira.

"I was freed by a green hedgehog named Scourge and taken here because his master wishes to have the aid of my clan and our skills!" yelled Conquering Storm.

"I was freed by a green hedgehog named Scourge too and he freed me for the same reason!" screeched Zira.

"Well only one of us will serve his master and it'll be ME!" yelled Conquering Storm.

"We'll determine that ourselves little lynx..." growled Zira softly.

"ENOUGH!" bellowed Finitevus.

His voice echoed menacingly around the interior of *The Nefarious* . The entire armada fell silent and all eyes were cast over to Finitevus. Sycorax, Conquering Storm, Zira and Jim all stared at Finitevus in amazement as if he was the msot incredible thing they'd ever seen. The sheer power of his voice had been enough to startle them so they wondered how much power his body had. Now there was silence, Finitevus cleared his throat.

"Greetings Conquering Storm, Zira the Ruthless, Lord Sycorax and Cutthroat Jim." he announced in a single breath and without stopping "I am Dr. Finitevus. I have sent members of my armada to come and free you from captivity or in your case Jim, from isolation on a lonely island. You have me to thank for the reason you're all here today."

"In that case, thank you Dr. Finitevus." said Conquering Storm with a bow "Me and my clan owe you are gratitude for your generosity."

"So do I." said Zira "I hope that you'll give me what I want in return for freeing me from that wretched prison."

I'm coming to the reason you're all here ladies, please be patient." said Finitevus smoothly "Now then, I am formulating an army. An army of villains who have been wronged too many times in the past

and deserve justice for all that's happened to them. I call it "The Dark Armada" and it has only one purpose in mind, to destroy the Royal Fighters Service and take over the world. Each and every one of us have a goal in mind for Mobius. Scourge and Fiona want to rule the world, Raphael wants to make everybody a cyborg, Captain Metal wants to make everybody a robot pirate, Ravage just wants peace, Team Diamond want riches and I just want world order as Mobius is like a blazing fire that cannot be controlled. What intentions do you four have?"

"I want to conquer Chun-Nan!" yelled both Zira and Conquering Storm.

"I want a world without politics!" declared Sycorax.

"I just want treasures and lots of em'!" shouted Cutthroat Jim.

"Those can be arranged." purred Finitevus "Zira and Conquering Storm, I promise you BOTH Chun-Nan. I do not care if you want to fight each other for Chun-Nan, just know that as long as you're with me, you have a chance of winning the battle and making Chun-Nan yours."

Conquering Storm and Zira liked that idea. They both wanted to conquer Chun-Nan and Fintievus was going to let them decide who rules the country. This would be very fun indeed. For now, they knew that working together would be a wise idea. They'd be likelier to win if they worked together. Once Chun-Nan was there's, they could decide who gets it overall. They both bowed to Finitevus.

"We accept your offer." they both said.

"Good." said Fintievus delightedly "Sycorax, when the Dark Armada conquers Mobius, there will be NO government. You will have your dream world but I strongly advise you not to try and take down Scourge and Fiona for they want to rule Mobius and will defend their position with an iron fist."

"Don't worry doc, when me and Fiona are in charge, there won't be any governments and we won't boss Scyorax around. He can do as he pleases." lied Scourge. He was secretly plotting to dispose of

Sycorax so that he wouldn't try and take him and Fiona out when they became rulers of Mobius.

"Sounds good to me." said Sycorax "Count me and my boys in." he added, putting his hands on Vladek and Romeo's shoulders.

"Very happy to hear that." crooned Finitevus "Cutthroat Jim, you'll have all the treasures you could possibly want if you join me. And you and Captain Metal will make a good team indeed given you're both pirates and are both captains. Do you accept my offer?"

"Sure do matey!" cried Jim "This ol' sea dog be all too happy to join yer crew Finitevus me heartie!"

Good. The Dark Armada is now officially formed!" declared Finitevus "Together, we will all stand against the oppressors that are the Royal Fighters! Never again will their shadow eclipse us! Sonic the Hedgehog and his pathetic friends will be dead once we strike and once they're gone, NOBODY will stand in our way!"

The applause and cheering that erupted from all the villains in the room went on for many minutes. The Dark Armada was formed and waiting to strike...and Sonic the Hedgehog had no idea what was coming. The Death Egg maybe their biggest priority but even if they took Eggman out once and for all, the Dark Armada would take his place and Mobius would never be able to experience a peaceful life again. Finitevus ordered *The Nefarious* to fly off. He had one thing to do. Take down Dr. Eggman and the Death Egg. Once that was done, the armada would make its move. Operation: Enerjak Reborn was about to begin...

Footnotes:

***See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 158**

**** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 185**

***** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 191**

****** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 193**

******* See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 116-119**

******** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 37-38**

********* See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 153**

********** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Story 154 (Gee I'm bringing up a LOT of past continuity in this thing!)**

*********** See *Sonic the Hedgehog: Heroes of Mobius* Stories 52-56 (I think I'm done...)**